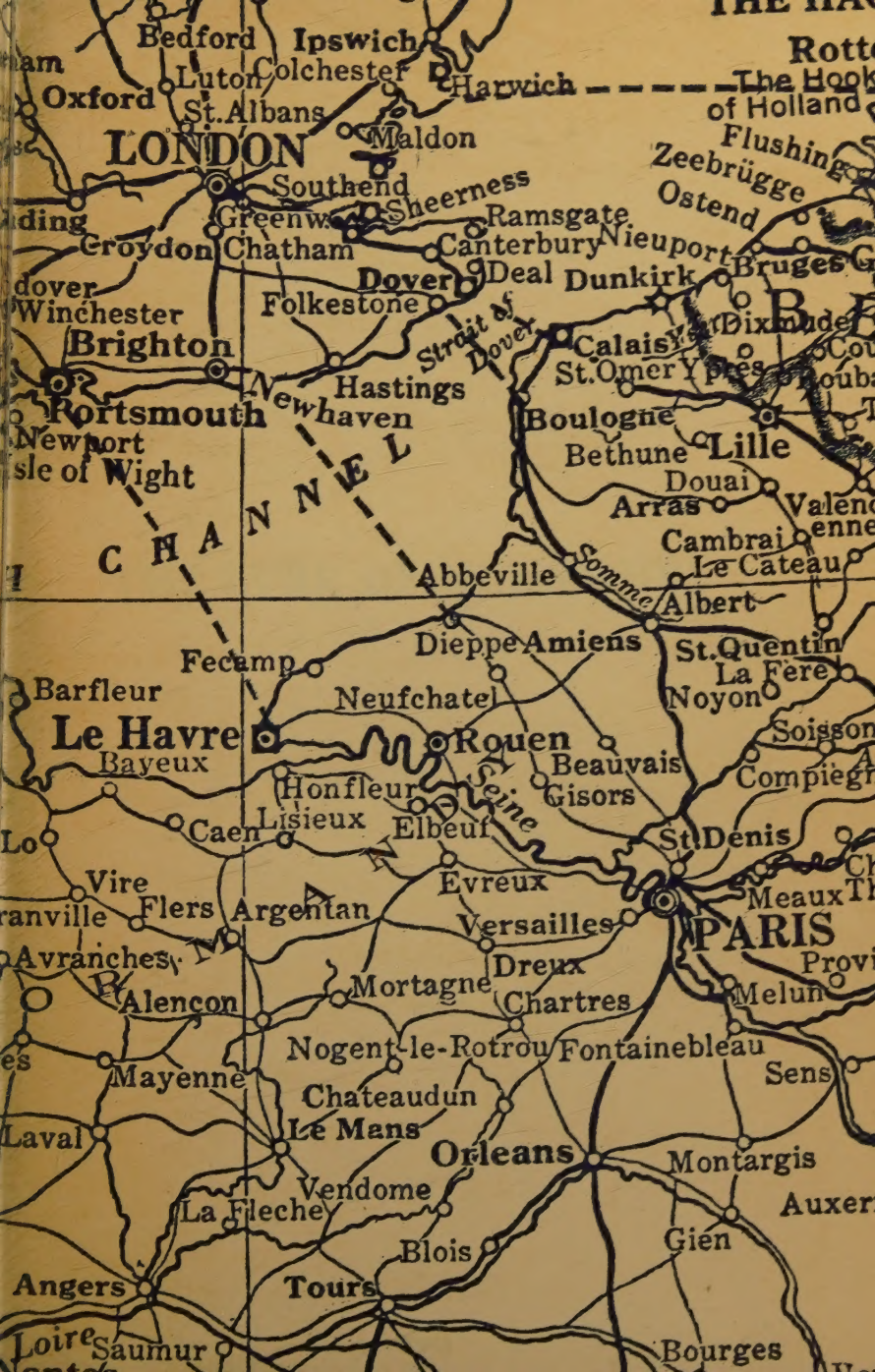








**LONDON**

**CHANN E L**

**Le Havre**

**PARIS**

**Orleans**

**Tours**

**Angers**

**Loire**

**Caen**

**Alencon**

**Laval**

**Saumur**

**Vire**

**Avranches**

**Mayenne**

**Chateaudun**

**Vendome**

**Blois**

**Flers**

**Argentan**

**Mortagne**

**Nogent-le-Rotrou**

**Fontainebleau**

**Sens**

**Auxerre**

**Evreux**

**Versailles**

**Chartres**

**Montargis**

**Gien**

**Bourges**

**Meaux**

**St. Denis**

**Provins**

**Melun**

**Saint-Denis**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Barfleur**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**

**La Fere**

**Noyon**

**Soissons**

**Compiègne**

**Beauvais**

**Gisors**

**Elbeuf**

**Lisieux**

**Honfleur**

**Bayeux**

**Fecamp**

**Dieppe**

**Amiens**

**St. Quentin**



**THE LURE OF NORMANDY**







ONE OF THE TOWERS OF ROUEN CATHEDRAL

ST. OLAF COLLEGE  
LIBRARY  
NORWICH, CONNECTICUT

# THE LURE OF NORMANDY

BY

FRANCES M. GOSTLING

OFFICIER D'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE

*Author of "The Lure of French Châteaux," "The Lure of  
English Cathedrals," "The Lure of the Riviera," etc., etc.*

ILLUSTRATED



ST. OLAF COLLEGE  
LIBRARY  
NORTHFIELD, MINN.

NEW YORK

ROBERT M. McBRIDE & COMPANY

1927

DC611  
N848G6

*Published, May, 1927*

ST. OLAF COLLEGE  
LIBRARY  
NORTHBELD, MINNESOTA

THE LURE OF NORMANDY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO  
MY VERY DEAR AND FAITHFUL  
FRIEND  
MADEMOISELLE THÉRÈSE PARRE  
WITH MY SINCERE AND  
GRATEFUL AFFECTION



## PREFACE

NORMANDY is a country of many Lures, and these she employs to attract many different kinds of people.

There is the Lure of her seaside resorts, almost all of which are delightful and beautiful. Some of these towns have been deliberately built as pleasure centres, for example Deauville, constructed in a few months in 1860 by the Duc de Morny, to provide distractions for the Parisians. Others have taken their origin from tiny fishing villages, to become more or less important ports, each having its special attractions, by no means the least of which is the Casino, with its dancing-hall and gambling-tables.

Then there is the Lure of the open country, the beautiful rolling chalk-downs, the apple orchards, the quaint thatched villages, the ancient churches, the wild forest and homely pastoral scenery, so seductive to the walker, the cyclist, and the artist.

And the Lure of the old buildings. Ah, the old buildings! The cathedrals, the churches, and castles of Normandy are second to none, either in age or beauty. And closely connected with this last feature is the Historical Lure of Normandy, appeal-

## THE LURE OF NORMANDY

ing especially to English-speaking people, because for several centuries the stories of England and Normandy were so closely interwoven.

The present little volume is chiefly concerned with these last two aspects of Normandy. As we wander from place to place, from castle to castle, from cathedral to cathedral, we call to memory some of the great events with which each has been associated, the people who have walked the ancient streets, the men and women whose bodies still lie beneath the tombs of the churches, and particularly shall we think of the great personages who have made the Province of Normandy what it is to-day.

Here are Rollo and his Vikings, making their way up the Seine in their quaintly shaped Scandinavian galleys. Here, at Caen, we shall find Queen Matilda in the old castle, seated among her ladies, stitching away at her famous embroidery. We shall see King John of England stealing along in his boat by night on that ghastly errand of his. And as we walk up the Rue de la Grosse Horloge at Rouen we meet Jeanne d'Arc riding to her fiery death in the Market Place. . . .

But there is one character we shall encounter everywhere in Normandy. There is no getting away from him, for whether it is in the town or the country we travel, this Normandy has remained through the centuries the land of William surnamed the Conqueror.

FRANCES M. GOSTLING.

# CONTENTS

| CHAP.                          | PAGE |
|--------------------------------|------|
| I. THE SEINE . . . . .         | 11   |
| II. CAUDEBEC . . . . .         | 21   |
| III. ROUEN . . . . .           | 53   |
| IV. CHATEAU GAILLARD . . . . . | 95   |
| V. EVREUX . . . . .            | 102  |
| VI. LISIEUX . . . . .          | 111  |
| VII. CAEN . . . . .            | 120  |
| VIII. FALAISE . . . . .        | 149  |
| IX. BAYEUX . . . . .           | 169  |



## ILLUSTRATIONS

|                                                              |                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| One of the Towers of Rouen Cathedral .                       | <i>Frontis</i>     |
|                                                              | <i>Facing Page</i> |
| The City of Rouen and the River Seine . . .                  | 44                 |
| The West Front of Caudebec Church . . .                      | 45                 |
| Rue de la Grosse Horlage . . . . .                           | 60                 |
| The Staircase to the Treasury, Rouen Cathedral               | 61                 |
| A Street near the Cathedral, Rouen . . .                     | 92                 |
| The Church of St. Maclou, Rouen . . . .                      | 93                 |
| The Tour de Beurre, Notre Dame Cathedral,<br>Rouen . . . . . | 108                |
| L'Aître de S. Maclou, Rouen . . . . .                        | 109                |
| The Church of St. Stephen, Caen . . . .                      | 124                |
| The Abbaye of Ardennes . . . . .                             | 125                |
| A Farmyard in Old Normandy . . . . .                         | 140                |
| A Typical Chateau in Normandy . . . .                        | 140                |
| The Castle of Falaise . . . . .                              | 156                |
| Statue of William the Conqueror at Falaise .                 | 157                |
| The Nave of the Cathedral at Bayeux . .                      | 172                |



# THE LURE OF NORMANDY



# THE LURE OF NORMANDY

## CHAPTER I

### THE SEINE

It was a lovely day in early September, the sun shining, the little crested wavelets dancing: all nature, in fact, smiling a welcome to us as the *Hantonia* steamed her stately way into the harbour of Le Havre.

It is always a delightful moment, this arrival in a foreign country. If the passage has been stormy, the joy of finding it over is the greater; if, like ourselves, you have passed a perfect night, lulled by the gentle rocking of the waves, you wake refreshed as you never do on shore, and hastening on deck, watch with a child's delight the working of the great cranes as they swing the piles of luggage through the air.

I love this old "Haven," with its tall, dilapidated houses, its wharves and crowded trams, its long streets, and the funny little restaurant to which we always make our way to eat our first French break-

fast. This little place was just beginning its daily life when we arrived. The girl with the squint was polishing the already spotless floor with petrol, the landlady had just taken her seat upon the dais, from which, sheltered by a hedge of aspidistras, she could keep one eye on the room with its six tables, and the other on the door leading to the kitchen.

Since our last visit the landlord seemed to have disappeared, but was replaced by a very busy little fox-terrier, who rushed about seeing after everything, and keeping the girls up to their work far better than his late master had done.

After breakfast, having some hours to spare before our boat started for Caudebec, we wandered round to the public gardens which were even more beautifully kept than we remembered, and no wonder, for in the midst there is a great bronze statue of a very imperious Francis I, the founder of Le Havre, who stands looking out over a marvellous carpet of begonias, while around are forests of crimson and yellow cannas, fuchsias, roses, heliotrope, and every other kind of flower which the heart of a "Salamander" could desire.

I wonder what the great Francis would think could he see his little port to-day. It was as a shelter for vessels navigating the ocean that he nominally established this haven; but there is no doubt that it was actually intended as a war dépôt to be used against England in time of need. We strolled out to the Plage of the New Quay, where

has been erected a very fine bronze statue given by the Belgians to the city of Le Havre, in recognition of the hospitality shown to the emigrants during the Great War. Le Havre is quite a city of statues. In front of the Hôtel de Ville, sitting in a large bed of scarlet geraniums, we noticed one of Bernardine de Saint Pierre, that æsthetic friend and disciple of Rousseau, and author of the once popular romance *Paul and Virginia*. He was born at Le Havre in 1737.

The last time that we had travelled up the Seine provisions had run short, and we had been obliged to go without our lunch, so now we shopped before embarking: a veal pie, some brioches, a basket of ripe black figs, and thus provided took our places among our bags and cameras on the bridge of the *Félix Faure*. What a little thing she looked among the great ships, and yet how Rollo the Northman would have opened his handsome eyes could he have seen us steaming out of the harbour. He would certainly have thought it magic, and prayed to Thor for aid. For a little while we sat comfortably in our deck-chairs enjoying the scene, watching the gulls wheel round in the sunlight, dipping now and again to seize some tasty morsel floating on the water. Then out we glided among the fishing-boats, and the waves had grown white-capped, and we thought how charming it all was, how much more enjoyable than a stuffy railway carriage would have been for hours and hours. Suddenly the scene changed. I had just noticed that waves were

breaking over the harbour wall, when we found our little steamer apparently battling for her very life amid a tempest of wind and water. Our deck-chairs slid from beneath us, and we were hurled against the funnel, the bulwarks, anything which projected. To add to the confusion, the luggage which had been piled on deck was flung backwards and forwards, so that we lay bruised and half-buried beneath a sea of suit-cases and hat-boxes, unable to extricate ourselves. It was really too funny to be serious, and I think we were all able to laugh. But how glad we were to find ourselves a little later in smooth water, running up the Seine.

It is very interesting this ancient waterway to Rouen and Paris. We sat on deck in the sunshine, trying to fancy ourselves those first "Northmanns" who, more than a thousand years ago, made their way by this selfsame route to the interior, leaving death and desolation wherever they landed. There was the celebrated Hasting, supposed to have been a captive taken on some previous raid, but none the less dreaded on that account. And there was the great Rollo, of whom we shall have to speak later. . . .

But see, we are passing Tancarville with its castle, set on the huge bare rock. Tancarville, once the home of the chamberlains of the Dukes of Normandy, the Montmorencys, the Harcourts, and that Louis de la Tour d'Auvergne who, in the early part of the eighteenth century, built the

present château. Of the original fortress-dwelling much remains. Ruined and ivy-grown as are the ancient walls, it is not difficult for anyone to picture it once more with its terrible donjons, occupied by wretched prisoners, and the hearths of the upper chambers, surrounded by lords and ladies and laughing children. As to the gatehouse, with its double portcullis and caged windows, its "Salle de la Question," and other horror-haunted chambers, one must still pass beneath that to reach the modern château. The whole building stands, as I have said, high above the river, on a great cubical rock, which in Gaulish times was probably used as a fortress guarding the upper waters of the Seine. It was on this rock that the giant Gargantua used to sit while washing his feet in the river!

A little beyond Tancarville, looking up a valley, we shall catch a glimpse of the church tower of Lillebonne, the successor of the Julia Bona of the Romans. According to William of Malmesbury, it was at the castle of Lillebonne, in a circular, vaulted room of one of the ancient towers, that William, then simple Duke of Normandy, arranged with his barons for the invasion of England. The story has been told once and for all by Master Wace in his *Chronicle of the Norman Conquest*. He describes William's speech, and the long council which ensued. As one stands there it is wonderful to think that these very stones have echoed to the voice of our first Norman king, as he described to his lords

how Edward the Confessor had made him his heir; how Harold had sworn over a chest full of holy relics to aid him in securing the kingdom of England; of the breaking of this solemn oath; and how he looked to them, his faithful knights, to help him in punishing the perjurer, and taking possession of the country. I remember that as I stood there for the first time I could almost have sworn that I heard the timid voices protesting, "Sire, but we fear the sea, and we are not bound to serve beyond it!" But they had to give in, for William was a Northman, and accustomed to get his own way.

It was the wily FitzOsbern who was ordered to quiet them. Having interviewed the malcontents, and been appointed their spokesman, he led them back into this room where William was waiting for their answer. Listen, and you can hear FitzOsbern's very words: "Sire, look around. There is no people under heaven that so love their lord as these people of yours. They tell me that, to advance you, they would swim through the sea, or throw themselves into the raging fire. . . . He who should bring twenty knights will cheerfully bring forty; he who should serve with thirty will now serve you with sixty!"

But at these words the murmuring begins again louder than ever, until William, having ordered them all to retire, has them in one by one, and coaxes, flatters, promises vast honours and rewards, till each says what he will do, and a scribe, sitting

ready, immediately records it all on parchment. There is Odo the Bishop, William's half-brother, who promises forty ships; the Bishop of Mans who offers thirty with their crews. . . . There used to be a portrait of William, said to be contemporary, on the wall of Saint Stephen's at Caen, but this has disappeared. So I always fancy the great Pirate Chief as he is represented in a fine modern picture, hanging on the wall of the staircase leading to the Public Library of that city. We shall have to say so much about him in this visit to Normandy, that we may as well try to recall him thus.

He stands fully armed, wearing his crown, a white tunic, and a scarlet mantle lined with ermine. He is tall, very broad and muscular, red-bearded, and with the fierce blue eyes of the Vikings, his ancestors. Behind him are grouped horses, one no doubt being intended for that splendid charger, given to him by the King of Spain, of which it was said that "No better could be found, and which feared neither armes nor throng." At his feet is his shield, and altogether he looks such a warrior that, if he really resembled this picture, it is not surprising that the Viscount of Troaz exclaimed when he saw him ready for the battle: "Never have I seen a man so fairly armed, nor one who rode so gallantly, or became his hauberk so well."

But all this is ancient history, and the Castle of Lillebonne as nearly demolished as the Roman theatre itself. Yet as we stand looking down at

the great open hearth of the guard-room, or seat ourselves in one of the deep window recesses, we feel the old Normans very near to us, and the thought comes into our minds how different things might have been in England to-day, but for that conference in the old Fortress of Lillebonne, nearly a thousand years ago. For has not an old chronicler of the period exclaimed : "Like the brilliant sun at noonday, William the Conqueror appeared on the earth. He placed England in the rank she has ever since occupied."

Above Tancarville the Seine grows fairer and fairer, the country alternating with the windings of the stream, now the left being steep and wooded, while the low banks on the right are fringed with willows and alders, and further back little lost farms can be seen nestling among orchards and pastures. At the next broad curve all is reversed, it is the left side which is pastoral, while on the right are forest-covered cliffs. Sometimes a little Norman church tower will be seen appearing above the trees, and one's mind will turn to the long-forgotten lord or lady who built it, possibly as an expiation for sins committed in youth. It is these windings of the river, these constant changes of scenery which give to the Seine its peculiar feminine charm. For just as the broad, masterful, unvarying Rhone has always been regarded as masculine, inhabited by that terrible Drac of whom Mistral tells, so Seine with its coquettish wanderings, and coy meanderings, has been accounted feminine, and as I sat watching

the lovely banks flit past, the beautiful allegory of Bernardine de Saint Pierre, whose statue we saw at Le Havre, came into my mind, and I give it here, for it evokes a picture of the river such as few poets could give us:

“Seyne was the daughter of Bacchus, and had followed the goddess Ceres on her sorrowful journey as she travelled through the world looking for her lost daughter, who had been stolen by the King of the Underworld. They finished their wanderings in the north of Gaul, and Ceres being about to depart, Seyne prayed her to give in exchange for her services the meadow lands which lie along this valley up which we are travelling. This was readily granted, and moreover the goddess promised that, wherever the young nymph set her feet, corn should spring up, and flowers and fruit; and so she left her, giving her the nymph Heva as a companion, to watch over and guard her, fearing lest she might be carried away by the god of the sea, just as Proserpine had been stolen by the god of the underworld. However, one day Neptune saw her, and, falling in love with her beauty, pursued her with his great crested sea-horses. Already he had nearly reached her, when she called upon Bacchus her father, and on Ceres her mistress, for aid. Then, just as Neptune stretched out his arms to seize her, all her body dissolved into pure water. But in spite of her transformation the sea god has never ceased to love her. Twice each day he pursues her with loud bellowings and roarings, and

each time Seyne escapes from him and flies away up into the meadows, returning against the natural habit of rivers toward her source. And all the time she keeps her green waters pure and unsullied from the blue waves of Neptune."

## CHAPTER II

### CAUDEBEC

WE had decided to stay for a few days at Caudebec. Everyone knows the quaint little town, especially the English artist. One cannot visit a water-colour exhibition without being struck with the view of the cathedral spire soaring above the ancient gabled roofs of the Place du Marché, or recognising the grim old mansion of the Knights Templars in the Rue de la Boucherie, and the thought strikes one, what must Caudebec have been when the walls were still standing with their towers and heavy gateways. It was a very strong place in those days, protected not only by military skill, but by nature, for the hills close it in at the back, and before it run the swift, broad waters of the Seine, forming an almost impassable moat; so that in the days before Big Berthas, Zeppelins, and other modern war inventions, the little town could lie behind her fortifications, and, if well stocked with provisions, laugh at the enemy. And laugh she did often, though not always. Moreover, Caudebec was watered by the river Gertrude; and

this little stream, which may still be seen passing through the midst of the town, assured the inhabitants of a water-supply in time of siege. So when in the fifteenth century the English, under Lord Talbot and the Earl of Warwick, came against it, they had hard work to capture this capital of the country, key as it was to the doors of Rouen and Paris. At the end of the Grande Rue you may still see the remains of one of the great gate towers, and just outside it a very ancient forge, *Maréchalerie E. Baron*, still bearing its sign of a horse sculptured on either side of the entrance, and with window-fences made of horseshoes. Yes, Caudebec must have been a very strong place in those days.

In still more remote times, when it was a mere fishing village (the town even to-day bears three fish as its arms), there was a large island called *Belcinac* lying between it and the opposite shore. Upon it newly converted kings had built a monastery, where they would, no doubt, combine religion with comfort by putting up there when they came to hunt in the vast forests of *Brotonne*, which still lie on the opposite banks of the river. But *Seyne* and *Poseidon* between them have long ago destroyed the island with its monastery. For, like *Quillebœuf*, this portion of the river is subject to the tidal wave, the periodical return of which to-day forms one of the chief attractions of Caudebec. People come from all parts to see the great fight between the sea and the river. The hotel is crowded. Notices

are pinned up giving the time of the passing of the sea god. Motors and vehicles of all kinds pour in and block the pretty quay. Everyone has a different opinion as to the best spot from which to behold the struggle. For ourselves we wandered up the towing-path, into the quiet country, where we found the remains of a little wooden pier, and there took up our stand.

It was low tide, and the river lay like a mirror, green and lifeless, the reflections of the trees and bushes clear and sharp as though painted on the glassy surface of the water. Everything was so still, so slumberous, that I had nearly fallen asleep, when suddenly my husband grasped my arm. "Wake up!" he cried; "look, there it is!" And following the direction of his pointing finger, I saw, far away, down beyond Villequier, a great white, glistening bar, a huge bank of foaming water rolling rapidly toward us. And still the river at our feet lay sleeping, as though unconscious of the rushing, struggling white horses, which were even now bearing down upon it. It really was a most wonderful sight. For, as the great wave came nearer, it towered over the smooth, green water like a crested cliff, and rushed with such force, such volume, that it shook the pier on which we were standing, flinging the foam up into our faces and half blinding us. As soon as I could see again, the whole aspect of the country had changed. The sleeping river was awake, leaping, and dashing against the banks, no longer torpid and green, but

iridescent like the feathers of a peacock, and sparkling with foam-flecked wavelets, while, greatest wonder of all, the stream, which has been lying a moment before many feet below us, had risen to a level with the planks on which we were standing. Then, as we turned to look up-stream, we saw the mighty bore disappearing, growing lower, losing force as it vanished into the distance, and knew that the sea god was giving up the chase beyond Duclair, and that lovely Seine, having escaped, was once more falling asleep, calm and untroubled, between her banks.

In the ninth century Caudebec was but a tiny fishing village, belonging to the great Benedictine abbey of Saint Wandrille, the monks of which owned all the fishing rights on this part of the river. We will visit the ruins of this beautiful monastery later, for it was by its influence that Caudebec became the important place we find to-day. For the present let us picture the town as a group of huts, lying between the two forest-covered hills which still shelter it to east and west.

One day, about the year 876, the fishers saw a great procession of boats making their way up the river, and knew by their curious build, and the appearance of the chief who commanded them, that the Men of the North were once more about to ravage their country. These Northmanns, as they were then called, believed themselves to be descended from Noah, and claimed the God of War as one of their early kings, appeasing him with sacri-

fices of human blood. They increased at a very great pace, for wherever they went they took to themselves wives, and as soon as their sons grew up they were turned out to fend for themselves, the father reserving only one who became his heir. The stories of these sea-robbers are endless and full of horrors, as the peasants on the banks of the Seine well knew, for this northern part of France had suffered many times at the hands of such chiefs as Bier the Invulnerable, and his commander-in-chief Hasting.

This time, however, the expedition was led by a new chief, a certain Rollo or Roll, who, having been driven from his home in Denmark in the usual manner, was on his way to seek a new country in which to settle, and it is the story of this man and his doings which form the beginning of the real history of Normandy. It is said that the young chief had already learned some rudiments of Christianity from an early Scandinavian missionary, and though the tale of his conquests is horrible enough to make our hair stand up on our modern heads, he was a trifle less savage and bloodthirsty than his predecessors. Besides, while Hasting and his fellows had been merely pirates, Rollo was an emigrant desirous of founding a family and a dukedom. We shall hear of him again when we reach Rouen. For the present, as we sit by the river, we will only fancy we see his fleet disappearing round one of the many bends, and mark the long wake left by the boats and their heavy oars grow

broader and fainter till it fades in the glassy surface of the river.

It is a quiet place, Caudebec. In the middle of the day, to be sure, it wakes into noisy life, for the road to Paris crosses the quay, and many motorists stop for lunch in the flower-hung balcony of the hotel. But they soon leave again, and the little town grows quieter and quieter, till, if you go and sit under the trees by the War Memorial, you can almost fancy yourself back in the ninth century, when King Charles the Bald gave the rights of fishing here to the monks of the new Abbey of Saint Wandrille hard by; or those later days when Caudebec, already a little town, was given its first church by that great builder of churches, Duke William.

This first church, which was dedicated to Saint Peter, stood on the same site as the present beautiful building, but was in the massive Norman style of the period. To it would flock the country-folk for miles around, for churches were not so plentiful in those days as they became later, though devotion was stronger. It was probably served from the more ancient Abbey of Saint Wandrille, or Fontanelles, and, as it is the dominating and most beautiful feature of Caudebec, let us go there as soon as possible after our arrival.

If it be a Saturday we shall pass through the market, and the market of Caudebec is a wonderful sight, for the town is so small and the houses so crowded together, surrounded as they were, until

comparatively lately, with fortifications, that the whole place seems full of market. Even the quay in front of the hotel is covered by stalls and farmers' carts. Very early they begin to arrive, and the shopkeepers add to the confusion and crush by bringing out their wares to the side-walk in front of their houses, so that the roads are blocked not only by stalls, but by farm implements, machinery, huge red cider-presses, baskets, piles of felt slippers, hats, boots, umbrellas, while yards of gorgeous cretonnes lie in heaps or hang from the windows. And there are sweet-stalls, fish-stalls, while tomatoes, grapes, vegetables, and golden melons add to the dazzling orgy of colour.

"How much?" I ask a woman, pointing to a great, luscious, golden canteloupe.

"Madame, to *you* two francs," and I find myself walking away with the awkward parcel. Another woman wants me to buy a huge jar of oil, another a wretched duck tied by the legs. And pots, pans, brushes, shirts, boots, laces, shoes are thrust upon me, till suddenly, upon turning a corner to avoid the poultry-stalls which always upset me, the noise ceases. It is as if I had been suddenly struck deaf. In the distance I can still hear the faint babble of voices, the penny whistles of the children, the street cries, the footsteps: then, passing beneath an ancient doorway with hangings of frozen lace, from which peep the remains of many a tiny, mediæval figure, I find myself in the silence of the nave. I suppose the church of Caudebec would be

called Florid, or Flamboyant: and I have heard people criticise it in various ways. To me it is a church apart, not to be compared with any other. Its walls appear like carven ivory, stained here and there by time, and the sunlight streaming in through the jewelled glass of ancient windows. In the morning the western end is coloured by the reflection of the Red Sea in which Pharaoh and his horsemen are plunging madly; while above, in another picture, large, round, white cakes of manna are falling upon starving Israelites. The north aisle is dark, mysterious, with remnants of the frescoes with which the whole interior was no doubt once covered. But the nave with its huge, cylindrical columns, each crowned with a wreath of delicate foliage, is full of light. There is no break between it and the choir, save an old wooden screen, surmounted by a formidable row of iron spikes. At its door, during Mass on Sunday, the beadle stands majestic in gorgeous uniform, armed with his halbert, and girt with an antique sword, ready to guard the clergy and choir from profane interruption. The high altar stands against a central pillar from either side of which springs an arch; and above the altar, leaning against the pillar, is a great gilded statue of the Virgin with her Son in her arms. Behind, separated by the ambulatory, is the Lady Chapel, all blue, ruby, and gold, a dream of painted glass and delicate groined roofing, the ribs of which, meeting in the centre, form the beautiful hanging keystone of the vaulting—a graceful pendant four-

teen feet in length, a wonder, a prodigy of architectural skill.

Here, before the sculptured altar, lies the founder, and let into the wall to the south is a slab giving the name of the architect-builder. The little old fifteenth-century house where he was born still stands in the Grande Rue, and on it is a tablet bearing the words: "Ici était la maison de Guillaume Letellier, maître des œuvres de maçonnerie de l'Église de Caudebec."

In a small booklet by Madame Julie la Verge there is a charming story told of the building of the spire of this church of Caudebec. It shows us the master builder, Letellier, unable to conceive a worthy design for a spire to his masterpiece. It tells of a visit he paid, with his young daughter and a favourite pupil, to the chapel of Barre-y-Var, which still dominates the river half way between Villequier and Caudebec. The girl has been gathering flowers—clematis, wild roses, harebells, and the like—which she has woven into light, fragile garlands.

"For whom are those crowns?" asks her father, and she answers: "For Our Lady of Barre-y-Var."

"But She cannot wear three, my child," says Letellier; at which the girl answers, nodding sagely, that he will see!

Arrived at the chapel, the old and beloved statue, to which even to-day pilgrims are in the habit of resorting, is crowned with the smallest wreath, a second serves as a necklace, the third as a girdle. The child has solved the riddle, for Letellier, drawing

out the pencil, without which he never stirs abroad, makes a sketch of a spire, so light that it looks as though a breath might blow it away, and around it, to strengthen it, he sets three delicate crowns, so light and yet so strong that after centuries of wind and rain the spire of Caudebec is as perfect as on the day it was first erected.

In 1419 Caudebec was besieged by the English, who already held Rouen and a great part of the country of Caux. Both Talbot and Warwick were set apart for the task of capturing this key to the upper waters of the Seine; but, in spite of the frightful bombardment which ensued, during which many houses were wrecked, and the church itself damaged by the great stone missiles of the period, Caudebec managed to hold out for six months. Then, indeed, the inhabitants were obliged to give in, and the town became English under the command of the great Talbot. Sixteen years later, the peasants, encouraged by their many successes in turning the enemy out of most of the surrounding country, determined to recapture Caudebec. It was a Sunday, and some of the French captains expostulated, saying that they had already done extremely well during the week, and that Sunday ought to be devoted to thanking God for their victories. But Le Carnier, chief of the peasant army, remained inflexible.

"Ye are traitors!" cried he, and bade his men drive on with the waggons. It was as they were entering the village of Saint Gertrude, which lies in

the valley above Caudebec, that they encountered the English; and being no match for the archers, who were celebrated all over Europe, were either shot down, or cut to pieces, so that, as an old writer says, "A curse being upon them, the country of Caux was left without inhabitants."

Some of these tall buildings around the church have looked down on Charles the Seventh and the great Dunois making their royal progress through the streets after the capture of Rouen. Most of the nobles in the procession wore, no doubt, the fine, soft, kid gloves for which the town of Caudebec was celebrated, and the fashionable hats long known as Caudebecs.

I have not time to speak of the days when the Huguenots took possession and wrecked the church, which was then in the full exuberance of its beauty. Fortunately, they were not able to reach the matchless spire, or the balustrade where, in huge letters of stone, once gilded, can still be read the words, "*Tota pulchra es amica mea et macula non est in te . . . &c.*" But they vented their spite upon the beautiful west door and the interior of the north aisle! Built into the wall is a plaque which tells, in the spelling of the period, of that black day of destruction: "*La désolation de ceste egle fut le 12 de May 1562.*" And after it was done, when the town was still mourning over its mutilated treasure, came the Duke of Palma, Alexander Farnese, and besieged and took Caudebec, which cost him his life. For he was wounded in the arm,

but continued to fight on till he had captured the town. Even then, when Henry of Navarre had cut off his provisions, the dying man still led his troops from a litter, and it was only after he had got them all into safety to the other side of the river that he died. That was the end of the story of Caudebec.

Since those days the little town has lain sleeping beside her river, watching the ships go up and down with the tide, and the laden barges pass slowly by on their way to Rouen or Paris. After dinner, one sits at the open window, beyond which, like a thick, black, velvet curtain, hangs the night, and the silence is hardly broken by the soft ripple of the tide washing against the quay. Then far off sounds a horn, and our eyes try to pierce the darkness for the ship which is calling for a pilot to conduct her on the next stage of her journey seawards . . . a pause . . . and presently in the darkness we shall see three lights gliding past, ghostly lights, telling of a phantom ship starting out upon her voyage into the unknown.

Before we leave this adorable little riverside Caudebec, let us see something of the country in which it nestles, that Pays de Caux of which so much has been written.

There is Saint Wandrille, the great abbey of which Caudebec was the dependency. This beautiful ruin, now so silent and deserted, was one of the most celebrated Benedictine houses in Europe. The story of its foundation in the seventh century is very interesting; and as, after leaving the river

valley we walk over the hill by the ancient track trodden for so many centuries by the monks, and drop down into the little village which still bears the name of its founder, we will think over the story of this young Saint who is said to have originated the monastery.

Wandrille was a favourite kinsman of King Dagobert of Merovingian fame, who made him Count of the palace, and, being a much married man himself, with almost as many wives as King Solomon, was naturally anxious for this young favourite relation of his to follow in his steps and found a family. So the King selected a charming young girl, and the match was arranged. But Wandrille, like many of the more serious-minded young men of the court, had no mind to marry, his thoughts being all set on religion, and yet he was afraid to disappoint his all-powerful and somewhat irascible relation: so the marriage was celebrated. But no sooner did Wandrille find himself alone with his bride, still lovely in her rich wedding attire, than he began describing to her the excellence and virtue of a single life devoted to the service of God.

“Ah!” cried she, “but why did you not speak of this sooner? I also had resolved to consecrate myself to God.” So I suppose they talked it over, for the young couple left the palace that night, she to enter a convent, he to travel from monastery to monastery, till one day a relation called Erchinbald, who had just purchased this beautiful valley

into which we are descending, from a Frankish lord named Rothmar, made a present of it to Wandrille.

Now the place was already renowned for a sacred fountain dedicated to some pagan deity. To it people for many miles used to resort on account of its marvellous curative waters. Around this well ancient buildings had gathered where Druidical rites were still practised. Altogether it must have been a very weird and mysterious place, and the ardent young Christian convert was not long in begging to be allowed by his superior to "chase away the false gods," and replace the worship of Teutates by that of the White Christ.

It was after this fountain that the monastery which Wandrille built was first called. You will see the name still figuring over the entrance gate, Fontanella. As for the fountain itself, which lay at about half a mile from the new monastery, it became known as the Fountain of Callouville, and beside it was erected a chapel dedicated to Our Lady. To this place many pilgrims resorted in hope of a cure, for it was good for all ills. Even King Louis XI visited it, but whether with success I do not know. Statues representing various complaints were once to be seen around the fountain, and into the sacred waters sick persons and newly-born children were plunged, while the gospel for the day was read; and as late as 1888 there was held on the first Friday of May a great pilgrimage to the fountain. But these practices have passed away, and it is in the parish church of Saint Wandrille

that we shall find most of the ancient statues—Saint Méen, specialist for skin complaints; Saint Mamers, for pains in the stomach; St Lawrence, for burns and toothache; Saint Alexis, for terrors. But, if you wish to seek relief from paralysis or migraine, you will have to visit a certain old statue of Saint Saturnin, climbing up into the woods which lie beyond the monastery wall to the north, and find your way to a tiny eleventh-century chapel. There you will see a large archaic-looking figure to which pilgrims still resort, I believe. I was very anxious to visit this chapel, and asked a girl in the valley if she knew the way. "Yes," she said, "but it is difficult to find. Would madame like me to accompany her?" Certainly madame would, and, after refreshing ourselves with a cup of coffee, off we set for the forest chapel, which has replaced the original hermitage of Saint Wandrille. On the way we passed the entrance to the abbey, and soon after began our climb; and, as we went, the girl told me the story of the statue, which she always referred to as "Saint Retourné."

"But," said I at last, "I thought it was a statue of Saint Saturnin?"

"Perhaps," she replied, "but we always call him Saint Retourné, because of his returning to his old place."

It appears that when the first church of Saint Wandrille was built it was dedicated to *all* the Saints, the master builder undertaking to place in it statues of all then in the calendar. "You may have noticed

how many there are in our church. However, Saint Saturnin, or as we call him Retourné, would not remain. Evidently he preferred to be by himself in his chapel in the wood. He refused to stay with the others, and, however safely he was shut in at night, in the morning he was back in his old place. They even fixed him with nails, and locked and bolted the doors of the church; but he would steal away during the night, and in the morning there he was, comfortably placed in his chapel. It is said that the mason was so vexed that he applied for help to Monsieur Satan; but even *he* was no match for Saint Saturnin, and so they built him an altar in his chapel in the wood."

It was a wonderful little place this chapel, so dark that it was impossible to photograph the rude Norman apse or the old statue of the Saint. The forest reached to its very door, and roofed it overhead, so that it was wrapped in a perpetual twilight, like the story of the strange old Saint it sheltered. There was no breeze, not a leaf stirred, time itself seemed to stand still, and we fancied ourselves back in the days of the pious youth Wandrille, who, no doubt, often and often worshipped on this very spot.

On our return we visited the abbey itself. It is a quiet and beautiful place, but how melancholy, how ghostly! For a long while we wandered about among the ruins, admiring the remains of the splendid cloisters, and especially that gem of mediæval sculpture, the lavabo, where the monks used to

wash before entering the refectory. There we shall notice, as no doubt they did, the scene of the baptism of our Lord, and remark how an angel is standing by with a towel. Part of the abbey belongs, or did until lately, to Maurice Maeterlinck, who, I have been told, gave first productions of many of his wonderful plays here. How weird they must have seemed among these haunted surroundings!

"Do you ever see any ghosts?" I asked of the pleasant-faced young woman who showed us round. She laughed and shook her head. But I am sure that if *I* walked these cloisters by moonlight I should feel the old monks all around me; and some of them, in spite of their sacred calling were, I am afraid, not very pleasant people to meet. I have an old book in which strange and terrifying stories are told of those who offended the monks of Saint Wandrille. There was the dishonest bell-founder, who, having received metal from the abbot to cast a bell for the parish church, was tempted by its quality to change it for some of less value. It is said that, whenever the bell sounded, the wretched man went mad, and howled like a dog.

And there was the wicked sacristan who stole the great golden cross and chalice which had been given to the abbey by Saint Wulfran. It was by this beautiful door leading out of the cloister that he entered the church with his accomplice. When the theft was discovered, the actual robber was hanged; but the monk, shunned by all, was allowed to live

out his days. He was buried in front of this very door; and from his grave, poisoned by his sacrilegious crime, continued to issue for many years multitudes of loathsome toads.

As we walk up the nave of the ruined church, and reach the site of the high altar, we shall be reminded of a beautiful story told in the *Chronicon Fontanellense*. The buildings had been lying in ruins ever since they were wrecked by Hasting and his savage crew; even the altar had disappeared. One day a great lord named Tostig, who was hunting in the forest, saw the stag, closely pursued by the hounds, make its way into the abbey grounds. Gaining the spot where once the church had stood, it ran to the site of the altar and, turning, faced the dogs. A moment later Tostig entered, to see his hounds gathered in a circle, with glaring eyes and bristling backs, not daring to advance, and in his eagerness spurred his horse forward. But the pious beast, like the dogs, was able to see further into the unknown than the man, and, recognising the sanctity of the place, refused to move. So Tostig, dismounting, offered his humble prayer to God, to whom the sacred place was dedicated, and thereafter made it his business to publish far and wide the astounding miracle: but doubt & collard's had seen & abbey & group

A few miles east of Saint Wandrille, lying in a beautiful valley surrounded on three sides by the Seine, we shall find another great abbey, that of Jumièges. The story of its foundation takes us once more to the Court of Dagobert, for Philibert,

the founder, was one of the little band of saintly young men to which Wandrille belonged. They were looked upon with some contempt as mystics. But their names have come down to us as saints—Saint Eloi, Saint Didier, Saint Ouen, Saint Arnault, and many others. They formed a little society of their own at the brilliant but scandalous Merovingian court, the great king of which, as someone has said, was “distinguished equally by his strict administration of justice and the number and variety of his wives.”

Gradually the young men, having completed their studies, drifted away, and became powers for good in different parts of the country. Philibert, after having travelled through Italy and elsewhere, studying the rules of different religious houses, returned to Normandy and begged his friend Ouen to allow him to found a monastery somewhere in his diocese of Rouen. But where could he obtain the land on which to build? The much married Dagobert was dead; we can still find his tomb in the royal mausoleum at Saint Denis. Clovis, his son, was reigning in his stead, and he had married a beautiful and pious Breton girl named Bathilde. She it was who persuaded her husband to give the monk the site of an old Roman castrum which lay on the banks of the Seine. Here were quickly raised three churches and the necessary accommodation for seventy monks. They followed the rule of Saint Colomban, their time being partly spent in prayer and contemplation, partly in

clearing the forests, and partly in evangelising the people.

These early religious communities must have been a great blessing to the wretched peasants of Normandy, broken and pillaged as they were by constant war, famine, and pestilence. The monks were their only doctors, teachers, and friends, almost as poor and hard working as themselves, but better educated, and with a knowledge of agriculture, which was the foundation of the prosperity of the Norman peasantry. Unfortunately, when riches came to be heaped upon them by kings and princes, some of these great communities became self-indulgent, and lost their first fervour. It was so with Jumièges under certain of the later abbots.

As we follow our guide through the ruins, looking up at the mighty Norman towers and arches, we pause to think of some of the events which have taken place within these walls or in the more humble building which preceded the present church. It is thus that we recall those two unfortunate sons of Clovis and Bathilde, who, having rebelled against their father, were sentenced by the Queen to have their sinews cut, and to be set afloat on the Seine, to drift where Providence should take them.

There is a great sculptured funeral slab in the little museum, which the good woman who accompanies us will tell us once covered the princes. For it was to Jumièges they drifted, to be taken in and tended by the monks for the rest of their melancholy lives. It is a charming story, only I am afraid

it is not true, for even in Merovingian days boys of four and six did not rebel against their fathers, and that was the age of these young princes when Clovis the Second died. However, there are plenty of other interesting people connected with the abbey. These ancient walls and arches have looked down on Edward the Confessor, who, while spending a week at Caudebec, visited Jumièges; on Harold, who, according to one tradition, swore his kingdom away at this same abbey; it was up the nave of this great church of Saint Mary that the long procession marched when the Archbishop of Rouen consecrated the building in the presence of William the Conqueror and his court; later came Richard Cœur de Lion, to return thanks to God after his captivity. But perhaps the most romantic figure we shall evoke at Jumièges is that of the beautiful Agnes Sorel—la Belle des Belles, as her lover Charles VII named her. He built a house for her near the abbey, and used often to be seen there with her. You can see the place to-day at Mesnil-sous-Jumièges. As for Agnes, whatever were her relations with the King, she was, according to the tradition which has survived at Jumièges, a gentle, religious person, and very charitable to the poor, who loved her. What remains of her house is now a peasant's cottage, but her spirit seems still to linger in the apple orchards and country lanes which lie around her former home.

. . . . .  
One day we went by an old motor bus up to

Yvetot, a most amusing expedition. The route leads up a steep valley to the north, passing on the left the road to Saint Gertrude, whose ancient church is well worth a visit, had we time. After climbing for some distance we emerge on to the high plateau which lies above the Seine, and from the southern fringe of which Henry of Navarre bombarded Caudebec. It is a strange contrast after the valley of the Seine, for we find ourselves in a rolling country of chalk downs, not wild, like those of Sussex, for every foot is cultivated; and even the cows, source of so much wealth to Normandy, are carefully tethered and obliged to finish the pasture in one place before beginning the next. Here and there we pause at a solitary farm or cottage, to throw out some empty vegetable baskets, or a milk can or two, and so get a peep into the clean kitchen with its brass pans and coppers, and the great clock with its shining pendulum moving slowly to and fro. William the Conqueror and his troops have passed this way. It was thick forest-land in those days, and oh! the weary miles and miles of road they had to traverse before reaching Yvetot. But the autobus makes nothing of it, and we soon arrive at the little town which belonged in the sixth century to a certain Gaultier, chamberlain of Clotaire the First.

There is a romantic story told of the great affection which the King bore this Gaultier, and of the jealousy of the courtiers, who made such mischief that Clotaire, convinced at last that his favourite

had planned to murder him, killed him as he knelt before him in the church. But it is a dim, uncertain story, lost in the mists which overshadow those wild Merovingian days; and I should scarcely mention it, save that the legend goes on to say that the King, mad with grief when he learned how he had been deceived by his wicked lords, sought to make amends to the shade of his friend, by creating Yvetot and the district into a little tributary kingdom, to be ruled by the descendants of the unfortunate Gaultier, thus giving rise to the title *Le Roi d'Yvetot*.

But probably most of us associate the expression with a little song of Béranger, which we learned in our youth, and which runs:

“Il était un Roi d'Yvetot  
Peu connu dans l'histoire,  
Se levant tard, se couchant tôt,  
Dormant fort bien sans gloire  
Et couronné par Jeanneton  
D'un simple bonnet de coton.”

I think that Béranger must have been familiar with sleepy little Yvetot, for it only wakes up once a week, on market day, and for the rest of the time certainly appears to sleep “*fort bien et sans gloire!*”

One grows idle at Caudebec, for indeed I think that the mere fact of living beside a river like the Seine makes one lazy. The pottering little walk to Villequier, to drink one's afternoon coffee, and watch the pilots start off to board the vessels coming up and down the river, how charming that

is! I have always thought that I should like to spend a springtide at Villequier, when the gardens which run down to the river are glowing with tulips, and the woods overflowing with primroses and violets, while the orchards on the further shore are white with apple-blossom. For it is a quiet, peaceful spot, where one can live for the merest trifle, and fish, or gossip with the pilots, or ramble in the woods, or, crossing by the ferry, explore the country on the other side of the river.

On Sunday we might sometimes go to the parish church, passing in the cemetery the grave of Madame Victor Hugo, who was drowned here in a boat accident: sometimes, through the dim tunnel of beech trees we would make our way to the ancient pilgrimage chapel of Barre-y-Var, where the walls are covered with the *ex voto* tablets of pilgrims. But life is so short, and there are so many places to visit in this interesting world of ours, that Villequier usually has to be crowded into an afternoon between lunch and dinner.

Our room at Caudebec was high up, looking out over the Seine to the broad, fertile country beyond; and for a long time we contented ourselves with wondering what it was like over there, or at most would cross by the ferry, and wander about among the orchards, watching the calves and lambs frisking, or talking to the old men and women who inhabit the ruinous, thatched cottages, so priceless to paint, so hopelessly uncomfortable to dwell in. Then one afternoon we ventured a little further, and



THE CITY OF ROUEN AND THE RIVER SEINE



THE WEST FRONT OF CAUDEBEC CHURCH

came upon the café of Madame Roland. Madame herself was looking out of the window, though I really could not see that there was anything to look at. She brought us some black coffee in tumblers, and we fell into conversation, while the scent of black-currant bushes filled the air, and the bees hummed drowsily among the flowers.

"The people of this side of the river seem quite different from those of Caudebec," said I.

"But yes," she replied proudly. "On this shore we are Gauls; on the other, at Caudebec for instance, they are Normans."

I do not know how much truth there may be in this statement, nor in what someone else told me, namely, that the two peoples rarely intermarry. Certainly the inhabitants of the south bank of the Seine are even now far more isolated than their neighbours of the north, and, before the steam ferry arrived, the country of Vatteville and the Forest of Brotonne must have been a foreign land to those of the northern shore. Perhaps that is why it is still so haunted by legends of phantoms, witches, and all kinds of horrors.

We motored through this forest one afternoon, crossing by the new ferry (the old one having been run down by a heavy barge some week or two earlier), and proceeding due south. The road at first led through orchards, and past little ancient half-timber farms, roofed with ruinous thatch, in which purple iris and other flowers had taken root, till presently we saw before us a great forest of

pinces, rising like a vast black level wall against the deep blue of the sky. In these days the trees are cultivated, made to grow in regular rows and plantations, now oak, now pine, beech, silver birch. But if we had traversed this district in ancient times we should have found a very different forest. We might have come upon magic fountains, great Druidical stones, and mysterious tumuli, beneath which, according to popular belief, lay hidden treasures, guarded by phantoms and strange savage antediluvian beasts; for this Forest of Brotonne was a ghostly place indeed, when the Merovingian kings, and even the later Norman dukes, used to hunt there. To-day there is little game to tempt anyone; though indeed once, at a spot where the road broke into five diverging rides, we saw in the distance a stag with a couple of does. But it was so unusual a sight in that silent forest that I half believed it was a vision.

After some miles the woodland ceased, the road mounted through open cultivated fields, we crossed a wild common scattered with stunted pines, and came upon the little town of Routot. Here we had been told to inquire for some marvellous yews, sole survivors of a prehistoric sacred grove in whose depths Druids once offered sacrifices. We were directed to this spot, known as La Haye de Routot, by a charming-looking old woman, who told us that if we went by the Grande Rue we could not fail to find these "Ifs remarkables." The Grande Rue turned out to have degenerated into a narrow

country lane full of ruts and holes which our motor much resented, but led us at last through orchards to the village—a tiny, remote place of four or five thatched cottages, and isolated from the world by miles and miles of forest land. And there, indeed, we found the sacred trees.

They stand in the churchyard, or rather the village church stands within the sacred precincts which from time immemorial have surrounded the yews. Once, I suppose, they formed part of a Druidical grove, and at their roots may have been buried the bodies of sacrificed victims; who shall say? We found them still shadowing the graves of descendants of those early men and women. We had not expected to find anything larger or more ancient than the yews of Kingly Vale in our own Sussex, the trunks of which average about seventeen or eighteen feet in circumference. But *they* are mere striplings compared with these two ancestors. The trunk of the larger is said to measure thirty-nine feet; it is hollow, and has within it a chapel, dedicated to Saint Anne, capable of holding forty persons. True, the foliage of these ancient trees is not so luxuriant as that of our own still beautiful giants. But that of itself, like the scanty hair of an old man, seems an additional proof of their great age.

Within the church, old and musty, we found a strange “bénitier,” once the foot of a calvary, and carved with the instruments of the Passion; and fixed to a rough carrying frame a little fir-tree

decorated with paper roses; and I thought, as I looked at the weird, archaic building, its beams supported by dragons' heads, how more than likely it was that the first Christian missionary who penetrated the forest had raised his little sanctuary on the very site of the Druidical altar of sacrifice. Those chapels in the very hearts of the yews! That little tree evidently still carried in procession! The mere fact of the Christian sanctuary having been built under the shadow and, as it were, protection of the yews, shows how sacred they were held. They were old when Rollo came this way; old when Saint Denis preached in Paris; old when the Romans built the theatre at Lillebonne; old even when Druidism was first introduced into Normandy.

"How old do you think they are?" I asked the haughty "priestess" who showed us the little chapel. She stared through me with her lizard-like eyes till I felt like shrinking into the earth from very youth.

"How should I know?" said she. "My grandmother used to say that 'les Ifs' were here when Seigneur Dieu planted the apple-tree in Eden." And, as I looked at the gnarled and twisted trunks, I could almost believe the story! What scenes have not they witnessed! They have a strange reddish tint as though stained with blood, and what blood? Even in the church itself the thought haunted me, and I wondered whether the first altar had been built on the site of the sacrificial altar of the Sacred Grove of Routot.

From La Haye de Routot we passed to Pont

Audemar, a winding road lined with acacias, and found the little town lying picturesquely on the banks of the Risle, surprising one with its broad, stately Place and extraordinary church dedicated to Saint Ouen. Such a church I had never seen, for the Norman chancel is very low, very dark, very, very ancient, while the Gothic nave is immensely lofty, very ornate, and of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It gives one the idea that some well-intentioned person having made a vow to rebuild the whole church died before the work was accomplished, having mercifully left the beautiful, old choir to the last, in order that the services might not be discontinued during the period of reconstruction.

Poor little Pont Audemar has had her share of troubles, especially in the fifteenth century, when the English and French struggled for possession of the town. And no wonder, for it really is a charming place, and lies in the midst of most interesting and beautiful country. It is said to derive its name from a certain lord called Aumer, or Omer, who built the first bridge over the Risle. It was here that the great Roman road, leading from Lillebonne to Lisieux, crossed the river, and the toll-house which Aumer set up soon constituted the chief part of his income. When later Rollo the Northman divided this land among his chiefs, he gave Pont Audemar to Bernard the Dane, who was an ancestor of the Harcourt (Héricourt) family. His descendants continued to dwell on the banks of the

Risle—the Torfs, the Turolfs, and the rest of the rude Scandinavian men, always ready for pillage and slaughter—till in the reign of Duke Henry I the savage Waleran dared to plot and revolt against his overlord. His castle was besieged and destroyed, and terrible was the vengeance of Waleran. For no sooner had the Duke's soldiers departed than the order was given to cut off the feet of all the dwellers in the Forest of Brotonne as a punishment for their remaining faithful to their lord the Duke. Awful days those were for Pont Audemar, for the castle soon rose again from its ruins to be the terror of the neighbourhood.

To-day Pont Audemar is a quiet country town, very proud of its past history and of its picturesque and interesting surroundings. They call it the Norman Venice; and, indeed, the many branches of the Risle, which find their way through the town, give it a certain resemblance to the Italian city, and as to the surrounding country it is certainly delightful. There is Aizier, with its memories of the ancient Gauls, who once peopled Normandy, and possessing a very early Norman church, with a five-storied tower surmounted by an oblong, stone pyramid. Apville, too, whose castle was the home of Admiral Claud Annabault and his daughter Madeline. But most interesting and wonderful of all to me is Bec Hellouin, the great abbey, founded in the eleventh century by the saintly Sieur de Bonneville, Hellouin. To-day it is a ruin, but what a ruin! The huge and splendid tower of the

church remains, and ruined refectories and dormitories, and the gateway of the Abbot's house, through which most of the great people of ancient times have passed. Henry V of England stayed for some time at this abbey, and Francis I spent a week there. But we think most of all of the great Lanfranc, afterwards friend and protégé of William the Conqueror, arriving at the abbey, robbed and humbled on his journey to Rouen. And how his genius quickly raised the House to the height it later occupied. And we think of the good Anselm, saintly Archbishop of Canterbury, who was educated here, and prayed and taught among these surroundings. For Bec Hellouin quickly became the greatest school in Europe for the training of ecclesiastics; and as we wander through the beautiful ruins, and gaze up at the lofty tower, we shall think of many a saint who has left his mark on the history of his country, and of his religion.

We had a long climb out of Pont Audemar, and when we reached the plateau we found the road bordered by apple-trees and the country dotted with prosperous farms. And I wondered what the old rulers of Pont Audemar would say if they knew of the present condition of the peasants of Normandy, and saw their comfortable cottages, and the gold and silver coin packed away in their mattresses!

It was a lovely drive home, sometimes spinning over the plateau, then dropping down to find the river. I remember a village called Saint Opportune, and an old solitary gateway of rose-red brick, set

with the arms of some forgotten family, all lighted by the afternoon sunshine, and everywhere cows were feeding. Then came a great descent, and Vieux Port, Aizier, and so we found ourselves down beside the river, which lay gleaming like a silver lance, and continued on till the forests closed in upon us again, untamed forests, with huge trunks mottled with gold and grey, as though draped with the richest of velvet. How wonderful these giant beech woods are! Planted close, their stems rise high without a branch till at last they break into a roof that not a ray can pierce. . . .

Later, as we crossed the river by the ferry, the sun was sinking behind a great purple cloud, the edge of which continued to glitter long after the fiery ball had disappeared. And the wooded heights behind Villequier grew black as ink, and the white houses of Caudebec ghostly and unsubstantial; while above them, distinct and glistening, pointing ever upward, rose the great spire of frozen lace, surrounded by its triple crown.

## CHAPTER III

### ROUEN

WE had been for a last look at the church, and so had missed our train to Rouen. When we reached the hotel Madame rushed out to tell us so. "But surely there is another train?" I asked. No, it appeared that there was not; but a motor-car had come over from Rouen with two gentlemen, friends of her husband, and if we liked to share the cost of the return journey. . . . Well, of course, we did!

It was a large, comfortable car, which took us and our belongings into its capacious depths and still left room for the original occupants—a boy who sat with the chauffeur, and his father, who seemed much exercised in his mind about the young women of his country. "Nothing but pleasure!" he exclaimed. "No comfortable homes for the men to look forward to when they return in the evening. Dinner at a restaurant *par exemple!* Does a man want that when he is tired? He can go to a restaurant by himself, and for less money. It is a home he wants, such as his mother gave him. And, believe me, it is the same in your colonies. I have

just returned from South Africa. Young girls come flocking out to be married. Can they cook? can they sew? can they make a home? Ah! Madame, I despair of my country and of yours when I think of them!"

To this depressing accompaniment we sped through Duclair and the beautiful country beyond; and finally, as the sun was sinking, leaving the great church of Bosherville to the right, began climbing up and up through forest land, till I thought the zig-zags would never cease. However, at last we gained the summit, and what a view greeted us, for we looked right down over the valley of Rouen. There lay the snakelike curves of the river, and on either bank spread the city with its bridges and boulevards, its splendid streets, and in the midst, rising high above the surrounding roofs, the towers and spire of the cathedral of Notre-Dame.

To understand something of Rouen and its development we must go back to the days when the land on which the city now stands had but lately emerged from the mud of the Seine. In those early ages the river spread far and wide over the valley, reaching up to where the cathedral now stands, and in the shallow water was a large, low island which in later centuries came to be known as L'Isle de Notre-Dame. It was on this island, protected as it was by the Seine, the Rothbec, and the Renelle, that a wandering tribe of Gauls, called the Velocassi, came and settled, thus giving birth to a village. As they grew and multiplied, other tribes

came and took up their abode in what had become the partially reclaimed river valley. But it was Roth, as the first settlement was called, which remained the chief town. Here the market was held, and here was established the worship of that mysterious goddess Roth or Rotha, after whom, some people assert, the city of Rouen is named. There are all kinds of legends told of those remote days. We hear of a Gaulish king called Magus, who built the temple for this mythical goddess; of Druid missionaries, who, without dispossessing the ancient Roth, raised a sanctuary over the site of her temple. We hear of the town being fortified by Julius Cæsar, who cut down the forest sanctuaries and built temples to Roman gods and goddesses, renaming the city Rothomagus; and because no self-respecting Roman could live without baths, he established them along the little stream of the Robec, which you may still find running before the houses in the Rue Eau de Robec, where in mediæval times dyers took up their abode.

About two hundred and sixty years after the birth of our Lord there appeared one day before the gate of Rothomagus a certain missionary named Mellin. He was a young Welshman, who, having been sent by his father, the lord of Cardiff, to carry the tribute to Rome, had there been converted and baptised by Pope Saint Stephen. For a while he lingered in Italy, but, having been warned by an angel to preach the gospel in Neustria, the Pope consecrated him bishop, and sent him forth on his

journey with his blessing. It was to Rouen that he made his way, and there, partly by his preaching and partly by his wonderful miracles, quickly converted many of the inhabitants. He it was who built the first Christian church on the very site where later was raised the cathedral of Notre-Dame—a somewhat different building from his humble oratory of clay and mud! How astonished the good bishop would be at the fruition of his humble efforts! Even in Rome he had seen no such building as this, with its sculptured galleries and soaring arches and the glory of its painted windows. We shall find Saint Mellin's tomb when we visit the ancient crypt of the church of Saint Gervais, but alas! not his bones, which were finally lost in the days of the French Revolution.

It was in the first cathedral of Rouen that the good old bishop Prétextat was murdered by order of Fredegonda, the fiendish slave and later the queen of King Chilperic. Her story has been told by that romantic historian Augustin Thierry. He speaks of the King's divorce from his slave-wife, and his marriage, for political reasons, with Galiswintha, daughter of the King of the Goths. It is a sad but charming story. It tells of the poor young girl's parting from her mother, and of her long journey over the mountains and through France, till she reaches Rouen, where the King meets her. We have even an account of her progress, and can see her descending from her travelling-litter before the gates of the town, and mounting

into a state chariot, "formed like a silver tower," in which, preceded and followed by gorgeously robed attendants and wagon loads of treasure, she makes her entry into the city. No sooner had Chilperic married her than he began to regret the serving-maid Fredegonda, whom he had put away for her sake, and, a few weeks after her marriage, Galiswintha was found strangled in her bed. Oh! these streets of Rouen are haunted indeed! But there are good ghosts as well as bad!

There is Saint Romain, the Patron of the city, who cast out the demons Roth and Adonis with all their iniquitous rites, or, as one might say, completed the conversion of the city to Christianity, and on the site of the heathen temples raised churches. He was celebrated for his wonderful miracles, was Romain; but it was to his destruction of the Gargouille, a terrible malarial monster which infested the marshy land around the city, that the Saint owed his greatest renown. In paintings he is usually represented leading the terrible beast to its destruction, having passed his stole around its neck in the orthodox manner. It was in memory of this deliverance that the King of the Franks gave to the bishops of Rouen the right of delivering each year a prisoner who was lying under sentence of death. An old French author has given a very fine account of this ceremony which took place annually on Ascension Day.

"It is the 14th of April 1485. The young King, Charles the Eighth, has just made his state entry

into Rouen, together with all the first nobility of France, and, it being Ascension Day, expresses a wish to be present at the 'Fierte de Saint Romain,' as the ceremony was called. For three days the keys of all prisons have been handed over to the Archbishop, in order that his clergy may visit the prisoners, hear their confessions, and select that one from among the condemned who is considered most worthy of a free pardon. On this 'Jour du Prisonnier' such crowds have flocked in from the country that the narrow streets of the city are packed, and it is only with extreme difficulty that one can move at all. Once caught in the crowd one is carried hither and thither as the human tide rises or falls. And while this sea of humanity is breaking on its shores, the five hundred bells of the city, the cathedral, the churches, the monasteries, break out into volleys, announcing the departure of the procession. The thirty-eight parishes of Rouen, with their banners, their crosses, their reliquaries, in the midst of which figured the Fierte or Chasse of Saint Romain, made their way from the cathedral to the Place de la Haute Vieille Tour. Arrived there, the fortunate prisoner who had been selected was led to the platform which stood in front of the chapel of Saint Romain, and three times raised the great Chasse containing the bones of him who had restored him to liberty, to his family, and to the world."

The quaint old ceremony was discontinued in 1790; but if we find our way to the old Place, now the vegetable market, we shall notice a building

of the earlier sixteenth century, and in front a terrace approached from either side by a lateral staircase. It was here that the ceremony took place, the released prisoner standing on the terrace, as he raised the Chasse on high.

One of the great names we shall remember at Rouen is that of Ouen, Keeper of the Royal Seal under King Dagobert, and friend of Saint Wandrille, and the other holy and ascetic young men of whom we heard during our stay at Caudebec. It was over the grave of this great bishop that there arose later the splendid church which is called by his name, that miracle of painted glass which in all our wanderings we have never seen equalled. For the stone walls of Saint Ouen are apparently mere fragile columns, and the windows so vast that the whole structure looks as though built of glass, and when the sun is shining the effect is magical in its soaring, delicate beauty. The last time I had visited Saint Ouen was immediately after the end of the Great War, when the vast window openings were filled with plain glass, the originals being still packed safely away in wooden cases. Now we beheld it in all the splendour of colour, and the sight was dazzling.

In an angle at the back of the choir is part of the apse of the far older church of Saint Ouen, the Norman building which was standing when these beautiful grounds were the gardens of the monastery; and the building, where now stands the Hôtel de Ville, formed part of a great Benedictine Abbey,

where the Kings of France were entertained when visiting Rouen.

In the garden, once the cemetery of Saint Ouen, we shall find a statue of Rollo the Northman, real founder of this Duchy of Normandy. He stands there pointing to the earth, and saying, "We will remain lords and masters of it!" A little behind him, on a mound, is a copy of the huge Runic Stone of Jellinge, erected in Jutland by King Harold of the Blue Tooth, and bearing the following inscription: "King Harold caused this monument to be erected to the memory of Gorm his Father, and of Thyre his Mother. It is that Harold the King who subdued all Denmark and Norway and converted the Danes to Christianity."

We had taken up our abode at a house in the Rue Thiers, the Hôtel Solferino. It was a quiet, comfortable place, and there we slept and breakfasted, lunching and dining wherever we happened to find ourselves when we felt hungry. It was a charming, vagabond existence, for the weather was perfect, and we were free to go and come as we pleased, untrammelled by fixed hours. So we wandered here and there as the fancy took us, and it led us very often to the cathedral of Notre-Dame, where we would sit, or wander, dreaming of all kinds of things: Of the years when the city was pillaged and burned by the Danes, Hasting, Biorn, Lodbrog, and the rest of the wild crew of Scandinavian pirates; till we saw the old church, which then stood on this spot, full of terrified women



RUE DE LA GROSSE HORLOGE



THE STAIRCASE TO THE TREASURY, ROUEN CATHEDRAL

and children, listening to the cries and tumult without, as the savage Northmen forced their way further and further into the city, murdering and burning as they advanced. The chroniclers have given a terrible picture of those times. Only a quarter of the population survived, for the invaders slew the old, and carried the young men and women into a slavery which was worse than death. So when, in 876, news arrived that the pirates were once more making their way up the river, with a fleet of a hundred boats, all the chief men of the city of Rouen sought their Archbishop and prayed him to hasten to Jumièges, where their enemies were resting, and do his best to make terms with them.

The good man, John was his name, departed, and found the handsome young chief Rollo, and his followers, established at the abbey, from which all the monks had fled with their treasures and the relics of the Saints. Rollo appeared quite ready to listen to the proposal of the Archbishop, which was nothing less than that, if the Northern Chief would grant his protection to the city of Rouen, the people would willingly submit to his rule. So, after talking it over for a day or two, they set off once more up the river.

The Seine, though narrower and consequently deeper and more easily navigable than in pre-historic days, still reached some little distance up what to-day is called the Rue du Grand Pont. From the lower end of this great thoroughfare there

opens the narrow entrance to the Cour Saint Martin, where is a charming little restaurant, clean and homely, where we used often to take our lunch. When the weather was fine the tables were set out on the pavement under a white awning, and there, sheltered from inquisitive eyes by bushes in square green tubs, we would eat "Bouchées à la Reine," and "Omelette au Rhum," and the other delicious un-English things one does eat at little, unfashionable restaurants in France. The more respectable clients would pass through to the restaurant proper, to eat in private, hidden behind little white lace curtains; but we vagabonds preferred the pavement, and the awning, the fresh air, the softened rumble of traffic, and the society of two cats who used to sit in the sunshine washing their glossy tortoiseshell coats.

All sorts of people lunch at the Cour Saint Martin—sailors, commis voyageurs, farmers, and other people in from the country. It is not a fashionable place, but then neither are we, especially when we are taking a holiday. Then we are just vagabonds, wandering about as fancy takes us. And where does not the great fairy godmother lead us?

This Cour Saint Martin, for instance. We are told that in the ninth century the site of this quiet restaurant formed a side of the inner basin of the Port of Rouen, and that it was probably just here that Rollo, afterwards known as the first Duke of Normandy, landed. As we sit sipping our Benedictine, and dreaming about those far-away

days, we picture the Archbishop in his cope and mitre, surrounded by his clergy, and followed by the citizens, standing on the quay ready to welcome their new lord. And presently we follow in their wake as Rollo proceeds to visit the city, noticing the ruin his predecessors have wrought, the broken walls, the wrecked churches, the starved and miserable remnant of the people.

Later we shall meet the great chief at other places, for it took him many years to conquer his duchy. Some thirty years later it is when we hear of his entry into Rouen as the acknowledged ruler of the Province. He had just been present at the signing of the Treaty of Saint Clare sur Epte, and was now visiting Rouen to fulfil the obligations he had undertaken. It had been a stormy meeting, for the proud Norman had been called upon to kiss the foot of his overlord, King Charles the Simple, in token of fealty for the Duchy of Normandy, which was about to be ceded to him. The officer appointed to perform the duty for him refused to kneel, and lifted the foot so high, that the King fell backwards, causing shouts of laughter from the Normans and black looks from the Franks. However, things had quieted down, and now Rollo was on his way to Rouen to receive Christian instruction and baptism at the hands of Archbishop Francon, and later to marry the King's daughter Gisla.

"Who are the greatest Saints in this my duchy?" inquired Rollo as he left the font of the cathedral, clad in his white baptismal robes.

"The blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Michael, and Saint Peter," replied the Archbishop. "And as our special protector have we not Saint Denis?"

"Then," replied Rollo, "I give a part of this new land of mine to those great Saints, and an estate to each of the seven churches of Rouen."

And Rollo was married to the Princess Gisla in the old church which stood upon the spot now occupied by the great cathedral of Notre-Dame. He rebuilt the churches and fortifications which Hasting and his pirate chiefs had destroyed; and so greatly was he respected and feared that having caused his gold bracelets to be hung upon a tree in a forest near Rouen, they remained untouched for three years. Many were the farmers and workmen who came from other less well-governed districts of France to settle under his protection. Then, finding himself growing weary and old, he made over the duchy to his son William, and so presently died in his castle down by the river, and was buried before the high altar in the church he had so richly endowed. In a chapel at the eastern end of the south aisle you may see his effigy lying on a thirteenth-century tomb. But, indeed, what shall we not see in this vast and ancient building? In the choir was buried the heart of Richard Cœur de Lion, his great effigy, six and a half feet long, robed and crowned, lies in the south choir aisle, while that of his elder brother Henry is in the north. And there is the marvellous tomb of Cardinal d'Amboise, the good Archbishop of Rouen,

Prime Minister to Louis the Twelfth. He kneels facing the altar, as he so often knelt in life, thanking God, no doubt, for the love and gratitude of the thousands of poor people whom he had relieved from the taxes usually levied at a king's coronation. And opposite lies Louis de Brezé, Count of Maulevrier, the husband of Diane de Poitiers.

Sometimes of an afternoon we would find our way up the exquisite sculptured staircase to the treasury, and wander about among the relics of those we have met below. For here is the leaden box which contained the heart of Richard, and beside it the little coffin in which it was enclosed, resting on four small stone lions. And there are ancient missals in superb tooled bindings, and reliquaries containing fragments of third- and fourth-century bishops, and every kind of treasure which managed to escape the French Revolution.

And there are others, more nearly connected with England, of whom we think as we dream our dreams in the great cathedral. There is the familiar figure of William, afterwards surnamed the Conqueror, whose consecration as Duke of Normandy took place here. On this sacred spot Robert, his son, on his accession to the duchy, swore upon the Holy Gospels to respect the rights of the Church, and to govern justly and mercifully rich and poor alike. Here he girded on his Sword of State, the Archbishop placing the Ring of Office upon his finger. Here, too, comes William's granddaughter Matilda, to be married to Geoffrey Plantagenet.

She it was who built the first stone bridge across the Seine, a wondrous achievement in those days.

In the castle down beside the river, her father, Henry Beauclerc, died of eating too many lampreys, which, considering the very insanitary condition of the Seine in those days, could scarcely have been a wholesome supper for an old man.

As for Richard Cœur de Lion, although he bequeathed his heart to Rouen, he seems to have had little further connection with the place. But John, his brother and successor, was often in residence there, and it was in the old fortress prison down beside the river that he had his nephew Arthur murdered, or, as William the Breton, Chaplain to King Philip Augustus, declares, murdered him himself. According to this writer, it appears that John, having vainly endeavoured to bribe his servants to commit the crime, quitted Rouen suddenly, and went to stay in a castle which had been built by Duke Robert, the father of William the Conqueror, a little lower down the Seine, at Moulineaux. From Rouen we may easily visit the village, with its thirteenth-century church, and even climb the hill to the ruins of the castle itself. For three days the King lurked there: and then, one night, creeping down to the river, loosed a boat and made his way alone upstream to Rouen.

Halting at the river gate of the donjon keep, and standing in his boat, he gave orders that his nephew should be brought to him. As soon as he had him seated he pushed off into the darkness,

and I suppose it was the page who heard the cry: "My uncle, have pity on your young nephew! Uncle, my good uncle, spare your nephew! Spare the son of your brother!" "Vain lamentations!" says the chronicler. The tyrant seized the boy by the hair, plunged his sword into his stomach, and, drawing it out all dripping with blood, forced it into his head from temple to temple. Then, moving a little further away, he cast the lifeless body into the stream. That is the story of the old castle of Rouen as told by William the Breton. Nothing remains of the building to-day, save perhaps an ancient gateway, above which are three old dusty windows, and within the arch what is still known as the Place de la Basse Vieille Tour. It is a gloomy-looking place, even though the tower itself, scene of so many tragedies, has disappeared. In the tiled roof is a dormer window, shuttered as though to keep in the ghosts which haunt the uncanny place; and as we enter through the arch we shall be standing on the spot once occupied by the ancient Norman castle of the earlier Viking Dukes, later the Palace of the Plantagenets, and somewhere hereabouts was that watergate, through which the boy Arthur went to his death; for above is the inscription: "Sur cet emplacement s'élevait la forteresse dite Tour de Rouen, batie au milieu du X<sup>me</sup> siècle par Richard I duc de Normandie et detruite par Philippe Augustus en 1204."

One morning we set off by way of the ramparts

to search for the ancient church of Saint Gervais, near which William the Conqueror had a house and in which he died. Our route took us up through squalid streets with names reminiscent of past history, till finally, high up, just outside what was once the city wall, we came upon a church, completely restored, but bearing above the south door a plaque on which, below an olive branch, were inscribed the words: "Dieu aiex! La justice! Le droit! La paix de Dieu!" The last words of our first Norman King.

As we entered and glanced around, it seemed to us that the only sign of age (and Saint Gervais is said to have been the oldest Christian foundation in Rouen) was to be found at the east end, which is Norman in character, and where there are some ancient sculptured columns. We wandered round disappointed, peering here and there, hoping to find an entrance to the crypt of which we had heard, but apparently it no longer existed. Presently two little boys in red cassocks appeared and began ringing a bell, for a wedding as I discovered later, and upon my inquiring of them concerning the lower church, one of them hastened off to fetch the priest. We were standing on the south side of the choir when he entered, just behind the new oak screen which forms a backing to the stalls. Lifting a length of the moulding, the priest pushed in a panel, and lighting a candle invited us to enter. Next moment we were groping our way by a much worn, steep, and winding stair that

led down and down into the darkness below the modern choir. And there we found the original church of Saint Gervais, a veritable catacomb.

It was not quite dark, for behind the altar, which was raised a step above the rest of the soil, was a splayed opening closed by a grille, leading by a long, slanting tunnel up into the outer light, so that a faint grey twilight pervaded the ghostly place. Having brought us down, and explained that this was the original chapel of the Priory of Saint Gervais, ancient even in the days when William the Conqueror used to come and stay at the monastery, Monsieur le Recteur had left us to attend to his duties in the church above, and we stole about in the awful place, peering here and there into the twilight, trying to call back to mind the early history of this earliest of Rouen's churches.

In a niche to the north of the altar are four skulls, ancient skulls discovered among the debris with which the crypt was at one time filled. They seemed to watch us entreatingly as we moved about, as though trying to explain to us who they were, and to beg a prayer from us. Wherever we went their looks seemed to follow us. Oh, if they could only have spoken, what stories might we not have heard! And yet how frightened we should have been! I should have imagined them the remains of some of the earliest bishops, Saint Mellin, Saint Avitien, whose original graves lie in the low, arched recesses at the western end of the crypt. But the priest had told us that, at the

coming of the Northmen, these bodies had been removed for safety to Pontoise, and had been destroyed during the Revolution. And yet it is of Saint Mellin that we think as we steal about among the shadows. For they say that it was on this very spot that the good Welshman built his little hermitage, to which he retired when he felt his end approaching, and that in it he was buried, a church being raised over him.

In any case, it was no doubt here that the terrified monks of Saint Gervais took refuge during the murderous raids of the savage pagan chief Hasting. Now it is silent as the dead who lie beneath the ancient soil. Not even the faintest echo of the wedding service reached us. So presently, taking one last look at the "Four Bishops," as we named the skulls, we stumbled up the stairs and emerged, half-blinded with the light, into the modern church of Saint Gervais.

Of the monastery of Saint Gervais not a sign remains, so far as we were able to discover; for we would like to have seen even a few stones of the building from which the great William's soul passed out to judgment. We shall remember that it was as a result of his savagery that he met his death at Mantes. To revenge himself for some foolish and offensive words spoken by the King of France, William, having sworn by the Splendour and Birth of God, his greatest oath, to revenge himself, began by firing the French town of Mantes. He was galloping about the streets, enjoying the sight of the havoc

he had wrought, when his horse trod on a hot cinder, and he was thrown. He had grown enormously stout, and the wound he had received from his fall became dangerous. So, as I have said above, he was taken to Rouen, to the quiet monastery which lay on the height above the city. For six weeks he lay there, tended by the monks, and trying, for indeed he was more passionate than evil, to repair some of the wrongs he had committed, ordering the houses and churches in Mantes to be rebuilt, and his enemies to be set at liberty. And he made his will, leaving Normandy to the wretched Robert, who had given him so much trouble, England to William, whom he loved, and to Henry his money.

And now it is the 10th of September, and the sun is rising. The bells are ringing for Prime, and awaken the King, who has been dozing. "What is that sound of bells?" he asks, thinking perhaps it is his delirium returning; and when he is told, "I leave my soul to Mary the Mother of God," he says, and so passes away as uncared for as the lowliest beggar in his duchy. For no sooner was the breath out of his body than all left him, the servants carrying off everything of value, and leaving his body on the ground almost as naked as when he came into the world. Presently, hearing the news, the monks arrived, and the Archbishop sent a message, ordering that the corpse should be taken to Caen to be buried in the church of Saint Stephen, which William had himself built in earlier and

happier days. But who would take it, and who pay the expenses of the journey and funeral? Even his very sons had left him to see after their new possessions. It was a poor knight named Herluin who at last offered, for the love of God, to take the body to Caen, and defray the cost of the burial. So the last scene we see, as we stand upon the spot once covered by the monastery, is a hearse and a handful of poor men, headed by Herluin, making their way down through the ancient fortifications, and through the narrow streets of the city, toward the river. There a boat is waiting, in which they place the body, and so down the Seine they make their way, till they disappear round a curve of the river, and we shall not see them again till we ourselves arrive at Caen.

One morning we had been visiting the beautiful old church of Saint Maclou, "Eldest daughter of the Archbishops of Rouen," as it was once called, and having admired the exquisite sculptured staircase to the organ loft, and the other curious and beautiful treasures of the interior, strolled up the street on the northern side to study the fine carved doors of Jean Goujon. Then, continuing our way along the narrow and ancient Rue Martinville, happening to glance up an alley, our attention was caught by a mighty beam spanning it from side to side, on which was painted the inscription, "L'Aître Saint Maclou." Now we had been hearing about this curious cemetery from a young priest we had met at the cathedral, and had intended to visit it

before, so we entered the dusky gateway, and, turning through another to the right, found ourselves in a square garden, or rather a gravelled yard, with a tree in the centre, and surrounded on all sides by cloisters. It was a strange place to find in the midst of the busy modern city; but, as we began walking round and studying the buildings, we found it stranger still, and even rather horrible and gruesome. For all the woodwork, and as it was a half-timber building there was plenty of it—pillars, cornices, beams, outside stairways, everything wooden—had been sculptured into emblems of death. There were skeletons, leg bones, ribs, scythes, spades, grinning skulls. Sometimes l'Ankou, as the Bretons call the King of Terrors, would be seen stalking someone round a tree or a column; or he was appearing to a bride or a child. In fact, as someone has said, speaking of this grisly place: "Death is everywhere present, in the ground among the ashes of the dead, along the walls which are decorated with his fantastic dances, in the old church of Saint Maclou hard by, where prayers are still offered for those who have been and for those who are to come."

For me it was unspeakably horrible, and none the less because now it is used as some kind of school. I pictured to myself how terrified I should have been, as a young girl, to climb that stairway in the moonlight, and creep along the corridors where once were stored the bones taken from the central yard, when it became more than usually overcrowded.

For above the lower cloisters are other galleries, once used as charnel houses, but which, glazed in, now form dormitories for the children. Do they dream, I wonder? Do the ghosts come flitting in at the windows, or phantom monks pace the corridors? I had no opportunity for asking, the only person I saw being the superintendent, who, from her appearance and manner, was not of an imaginative turn of mind. But girls! It is all very well to visit L'Aître de Saint Maclou on a fine day in September; but what might not one see, and still worse *feel*, before daybreak on the morning of All Souls?

In former years this part of the city must have been a most pestilential district. Between the Rue Martinville and the Seine stretched a fever-haunted swamp, the stagnant water of which was only changed when the river was in full flood. Here were cesspools and all manner of filth, and it was haunted by armies of rats, which lived and bred among the foundations of the old wooden houses. So it was not surprising that every spring the plague should break out in the doomed district, and officials in long gowns, bearing white wands, be seen walking the streets and visiting the houses suspected of the sickness. When a house was found to be infected, the Marqueurs, having moved the sick person to the Hôtel Dieu, closed all the openings, barred up the doors, and set a cross of white linen upon the house. For six weeks quicklime was kept burning in all the rooms and the street, and yet the plague continued, coming back season by season.

It was the Jews of Rouen who at last called attention to the fact that an outbreak of what was called *La Maladie des Rats* always preceded the plague. Then at last the people began to realise the cause of the trouble, and to take precautions, but not before a third of the population of Rouen had perished. At that time the city had eighty cemeteries, those which were grouped around a church being called "*aîtres*," a word meaning hearths or sheltered places, because they were under the shelter of the church itself. The only one now left is that of Saint Maclou. It had increased in size little by little, a garden being added here, a field there. It was the last donor, a certain John the Carpenter, who gave the great doorway through which we enter the cemetery.

One Sunday afternoon we found our way to another cemetery, climbing, by electric tram, to the village of Boisguillaume, which lies high up on the hills that border Rouen to the north. It was here that the English established one of their large camps and hospitals during the late War; and though we believed that we should find no traces of it left, I thought that I should like to feel myself among the same surroundings which had been familiar to so many of my vanished friends. It is rather an uninteresting country, this around Boisguillaume. I suppose once it may have been covered with forest, like the high lands we passed on our way to Yvetot; now it is bare and empty, though not uncultivated,

and we were preparing to return by the next tram when a notice caught my eye: "To the English cemetery. . . ."

We had to walk some little distance over the level tableland before we came to it, and even then we thought we had mistaken our way, for the great gates led into one of those melancholy communal cemeteries one always associates with the French dead. The graves were crowded together in disorderly profusion, a chaos of mortuary chapels, wreaths of horrible artificial or bead flowers, even the paths were not kept, and there was not a blade of fresh grass anywhere.

"Oh!" said I, "surely it cannot be here that they have laid them, *our* dead?"

My husband had gone on in front, and was standing very still, looking down at something I could not see for the tangle of wreaths and crosses.

"Come here," he called quietly, and next moment I stood at his side.

In the very same enclosure, and yet not of it, a vast, square space had been set apart, and fenced round by a low hedge of clipped cypress. Within were long, narrow lawns, perfect lawns, along either side of which they had laid them, two by two, the little headstones like the backs of sleeping cots, the grass drawn up closely over them like a green velvet quilt. And for the rest it was an orderly English garden, no memorial wreaths, no signs of death, just a riot of pink polyanthus roses. And they lie there, our dear boys, as they lay in the

great hospital wards of Boisguillaume, only now they are at peace. We walked slowly down the long, long rows of little stones, seven or eight hundred there must have been at least, and read the names, "Private Millar, Bedfordshire; J. W. Gallant, Canadian Infantry; J. W. Pugh, Australian Infantry." From all parts of the Empire they had come to fight against the barbarism which threatened to overwhelm their Motherland. And they were so young, these boys, they had so much to leave. There was J. Burns, "ever remembered by wife and child"; and "Jackie," a lance-corporal, "always thinking of you, darling—from your sorrowing Dad and Mum"; and Private Smith, over whom had been placed those words which always come to our minds as we think of these dear men: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

The twilight had begun to gather before we had visited the half of them, and as I turned for a last look down the long, long rows of little stones I caught sight of the words graven on the central monument: "Their name liveth for evermore!" And so leaving them to their slumbers we made our way down again into the city.

There are many places which one visits just outside Rouen, and such charming places. Mont Saint Catherine, for instance, with the remains of fortifications dating back to prehistoric times, and rebuilt and utilised by almost every besieger of

Rouen. We climbed up one morning when the sun was shining gaily and the breeze blowing gently from the south. What a splendid view! There below winds the Seine, twisting and coiling like a huge silver snake. And on its banks lies the city, sheltered to the north by its horse-shoe of hills, protected on every side. And these shapeless and grass-grown mounds? I suppose they represent the fortress occupied by the soldiers of the league during the siege of 1591, and have seen King Henry of Navarre ride in at the head of his troops, ordering its destruction, and saying, in his grandiloquent way, that for himself he required no fortress save the hearts of his people!

Since those days a modern industrial town has sprung up on the further side of the river, differing from the old mother city in that the towers and spires are represented by giant steam cranes and factory chimneys that poison the air with smoke. It floats over the ancient city, dimming the glories of Saint Ouen, and blotting out the Tower of Jeanne d'Arc. And as I watch I think of the age which has given birth to this new suburb, an age that is becoming every day more and more engrossed with the things of this world, and leaving to oblivion and decay those of the world to come.

And perhaps even more wonderful than Mont Saint Catherine is the companion height, on which stands the great new pilgrimage church of Notre-Dame de Bon Secours. We ascend by an electric

tram, and it seems a strange anomaly, after leaving the busy quay and being drawn up the mountain side by a contrivance which would certainly a few hundred years ago have been set down as Black Magic, to find ourselves at the entrance to a broad pilgrimage road, on either side of which are booths and little shops for the sale of sacred images, rosaries, pictures, postcards, candles. It really seems as though during the short ascent we had gone back through the centuries to those days when everyone, rich and poor alike, went on pilgrimage. We had visited many such shrines in Brittany, where the people, being Celtic, still cling to their ancient Faith. But in this modern Normandy one scarcely expects to find so largely frequented a shrine as this of Notre-Dame de Bon Secours.

As we walk along the road the beggars come forward with outstretched hand. A blind man calls after us: "Do not forget me, sir and madame! Here is a poor blind man who will bring you good luck."

Around the entrance to the church the booths gather yet more thickly, but we pass on to visit first the great memorial to Saint Joan, which, both from its position and its character, is most beautiful and affecting. There she stands, the Martyr Saint of Rouen, bareheaded, but in armour, leaning upon the sword given her by Saint Michael, whose golden statue keeps guard on the canopy which shelters her. Below, on either hand are her friends Saint Catherine and Saint Marguerite, and on the broad

stone balustrade, which bounds the terrace, are four shorn sheep, meek emblems of the martyr girl herself. Far below lies the great city, just where the old walled Rouen lay five centuries ago, when the flames rose to heaven at her burning; only then she was among the smoke and the shadows, reviled, despised, and now she is on high in the sunshine, renowned and glorified.

It is a bold thing to raise a new church in a city like Rouen, but this shrine of Notre-Dame de Bon Secours is quite beautiful and satisfying in its gorgeous modern fashion. The walls are already covered with ex-voto plaques, and the colour scheme is exquisite, for walls, pillars, arches, even the framing of the windows, all are painted, and glowing with soft harmonious blues, greens, red, dull gold. When the sun shines through the richly tinted windows the effect is marvellous, for the walls gleam as though transparent, and lit from without by hidden fire. As I sit there writing, the light is falling on my page so that I can scarcely see for the glory of the shifting rainbow tints.

We managed to miss our return tram, and so, as the air had made us hungry and it was lunch time, we found a little garden restaurant, and there, beneath the green shade of a delicate, spreading solanum, availed ourselves of what the proprietor described as a Collation Champêtre, and ended with a "Tommysette"—a lamentable substitute for the Benedictine with which we usually finished lunch at the Cour Saint Martin.

Everyone who has visited Rouen will remember the so-called Tour Jeanne d'Arc, the only vestige now remaining of the great castle which Philip Augustus built in 1204, on the hill of Bouvreuil, at the northern side of the city. He had just completed the conquest of Normandy, and being above all a soldier, thought, I suppose, that the old fortress down by the river, reared by the ancient vikings, afforded inadequate protection to the city. So he constructed this new citadel, which at that time must have been considered a very marvel of strategic strength. It covered an immense space of ground, and, as it was raised on the foundations of the old Roman amphitheatre, was elliptical in shape. It consisted of several towers connected by high walls, and was intended to overawe the citizens of Rouen and the neighbourhood. The only portion remaining of this great building is the donjon keep, which to-day is known as the Tour Jeanne d'Arc. It has, of course, been very much restored, or, like its fellow-towers, it would long ago have disappeared with the castle of which it formed a part. But even in its present form it is very impressive and interesting, for it has witnessed many exciting scenes, of which three especially stand out in my memory.

In the spring of 1356 John the Good was reigning in France, and his son Charles the Dauphin was at Rouen with a large following, in order that he might be crowned Duke of Normandy in the cathedral. The prince was lodged in the castle, and there was

much feasting and gaiety. But among the courtiers assembled there were some who were not altogether loyal to King John, and the King was warned that the occasion was to be used as an opportunity for secret plotting. Filled with fury, John, accompanied by certain lords and an armed band, set off immediately, travelling by lanes and unfrequented roads, and so reached the castle. Now the tower in which we are standing had, besides the chief entrance from the courtyard, a little door which opened to the country outside the walls. Through this the King entered, and burst in upon the guests in the midst of their merrymaking. The old chronicler tells the story almost as though he had been present. "Suddenly," says he, "the door was flung open, and the King, all dishevelled with his journey, stood upon the threshold. 'Let no one stir!' cries the Marshal, 'unless he wishes to be struck down by my sword!' and he waved his naked blade fiercely. Then John, walking up to the King of Navarre, who was one of the chief guests, called him a traitor, and therefore a fit friend for the Dauphin. . . . Altogether, it was a tremendous scene, for John became so mad with fury that he could scarcely speak, and, seizing a mace from one of the sergeants, beat Lord Harcourt between the shoulders, crying: 'Forward, proud traitor! To the prison! To the prison! By the soul of my father you will have had time to learn to sing better before you escape from my hands!'"

Meanwhile the Dauphin had fallen on his knees

begging mercy for his friends. "Leave me alone, Charles," cried the King; "they are evil traitors"; and they were hurried away, and locked up in this donjon until the King had dined. After he had finished, two wagons were brought into which the miserable men were huddled, and taken to the place of execution, where they were beheaded.

It is about sixty-three years later. Henry the Fifth of England is ravaging Normandy, and has now laid siege to Rouen. On the 29th of July 1418 he sat down before the city, planting his standard in front of the castle wall. It was a horrible six months which followed. Henry was determined to capture the city, and the citizens were equally determined not to give it up. It must have been a wonderful and terrible sight for anyone looking down from the upper windows of the donjon. In those days the city was for the most part crowded within its walls, and the country beyond was filled by the tents of the enemy. Day after day, month after month, the struggle continued. Provisions began to fail, for the English had gained complete control of the river, and no supplies could reach the besieged. Every living animal was killed and eaten, even the rats and mice. Winter was drawing near, and thinking, perhaps, that the sight of their sufferings might move the English to compassion, the gate was one day opened, and out poured a crowd of old men, women, little children, all the non-combatants of the city, that,

with fewer mouths to feed, the besieged might be able to hold out a little longer. In the picture-gallery at the Beaux Arts there is a very fine painting representing this awful incident in the history of Rouen. War is a terrible thing, as we have seen even in this twentieth century; and Henry V was, before all things, a warrior. What ought he to have done? Had he fed the twelve thousand poor starving creatures, and allowed them to pass through his lines, it would but have prolonged the agony by encouraging their friends in the city to continue their resistance, or so he thought. So he kept them there for three long winter months, crowded together the living and the dead, in the damp trenches, with no food, no shelter, no hope. Only once did he relent and send food to the few survivors. That was on Christmas Day. But the feast over, starvation reigned once more in the trenches; and when, on the 20th of January, the English King made his entry into the city and returned thanks for his victory in the cathedral of Notre-Dame, there were only twelve hundred out of the twelve thousand left to return to their ruined homes.

The third scene we shall recall as we stand in this last remaining tower of the castle of Rouen is connected with Jeanne d'Arc. For it was in a prison of this castle of Philip Augustus that she spent the long months of her captivity. Some say confined in an iron cage, where the people used to

come and jeer at her. Others tell us that at night she was fastened to her bed by padlocks, and that three rough English soldiers slept in her room, while two others kept guard without. Each of her three judges had a key to her prison, that they might visit her at any moment, and torture her with questions. In the walls of her dungeon holes had been bored between the stones, that she might be spied upon by day and by night. I wonder if that dungeon is still lying buried beneath one of the modern houses which have been built on the site of the castle? If so, how interesting it would be to see it.

As she lay in that awful place did the Maid dream of the quiet, happy days in the old farmhouse at Domremy, when her mother taught her and her sister Catherine the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, instead of the A and B which she never knew? Did she picture the church close by her home, in which she used to spend so many hours praying, and watching before the Blessed Sacrament, or placing flowers on the altars of her friends Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret? Perhaps in the dark night, when her rough guards had fallen asleep, Saint Michael would appear to her, and they would talk of the great day, when, after surmounting her first difficulties, she had arrived at Chinon, and found Charles in the midst of his courtiers, recognising him at once as the "True Vassal of God, the Supreme Sovereign of France." Surely, surely, the mere fact that she distinguished him among all that

brilliant company was in itself a sign that her voices were from heaven? Then in the darkness she would see herself setting forth on her mission, clothed in armour, as white and shining as that worn by the old statue of Saint Michael in the church of Domremy, girt with her sacred sword, and bearing a white standard on which was pictured God the Father blessing the lilies of France. What a day that was! How the people had shouted, and blessed her as their deliverer, as she rode through the streets with La Hire and her "gentil" Duke of Alençon! And there would follow visions of great days, wonderful days, days as it then seemed to all full of miracles, though, for that matter, was not her whole life a miracle? There was the raising of the siege of Orleans, and her triumphant entry into the city. Ah! her Saints had not deceived her! And then that great and glorious day when her "Gentil Dauphin" was crowned and anointed King of France in the great cathedral of Rheims, and she had been there beside him, she the peasant girl of Domremy, she had knelt before him, embracing his knees, and kissing his feet, shedding hot tears, crying: "Gentle King, now is accomplished the pleasure of God, who willed that you should arrive at Rheims to receive your Holy Anointing, proving that you are indeed the true King and that France belongs to you."<sup>1</sup>

Alas, poor Maid! Had your King been worthy

<sup>1</sup> Old French Chronicler's account of the coronation of Charles VII.

of your heroism you would not be lying here in a dark dungeon of this castle of Philip Augustus, in the power of your enemies. No wonder that, as the old writer says, "Many could not refrain from weeping at the sight." Even in that day of his coronation and triumph I suppose that there were few who did not realise what a poor creature this Charles was, how unfit to rule the great kingdom which to the Maid was so sacred. Oh why, why had they not allowed her to return to her old humble life at Domremy, as she had begged? Instead, they had written verses about her, painted pictures of her, set up statues crowned with a nimbus as though she had been a Saint. And then, then the scene had begun to change. There came the truce with the Burgundians; the cutting short of the War with England; idle, wearisome days spent at Chinon. And yet she knew that the people had confidence in her, that the English feared her, that the country could yet be saved. If only she had had the King and the army at her back, she could soon have cleared France of the enemy. . . . And then Compiègne, the fatal sortie, and the terrible moment when she found herself alone outside the walls, in the power of her bitter foes, helpless as one of her father's shorn sheep at Domremy. That was on 23rd May 1430, and now she was lying here in the dark, waiting for she knew not what.

No one seems to have put up a finger to save her. Charles was once more living his depraved and careless life at Chinon. He could easily have bought

her from John of Luxembourg, her captor. But he preferred to squander his money on his favourites. And so she was sold to the English for ten thousand livres Tournois!

It was at the little village of Le Crotoy that the sale took place. In recent years a statue has been raised there to the Maid; but the old castle where she was imprisoned has disappeared. We can follow her, however, to Saint Valery-sur-Somme, that quaint old Norman port whence Duke William set sail for the conquest of England. From Saint Valery she was brought to Eu, and so by way of Dieppe, travelling along the old Roman road, to Rouen, which she reached on a cold December evening in the year 1430, as dusk was falling.

She entered the city by the Porte Beauvoisine, which was situated in the upper part of Rouen, slightly to the south-east of the site of the present railway station. From thence she could look down over the great city, darkening with the mists of evening. There were the narrow, winding streets, many of them as we see them to-day; there were the clock towers, the many churches, the convents, and in the midst, soaring toward heaven, the beautiful thirteenth-century stone spire of the cathedral of Notre-Dame. And all this was, like herself, in the hands of the enemy.

Of the weary months which followed there is no need to tell. Day after day, week after week, she lay in her dark dungeon; while her judges, who were all chosen from her bitterest enemies, "sought

accusation against her to put her to death." There was that arch-fiend, Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, and his creatures Loiseleur and Jean d'Estivet, together with many others, and of the English the Earl of Warwick and Cardinal Beaufort. As we turn aside to the left, shortly after leaving the station, and enter the dim old donjon keep, we fancy we see the sinister faces and shadowy forms of these her judges, seated and awaiting the coming of their victim. On the great hearth, sheltered by its heavy canopy, still lie instruments of torture such as those with which Jeanne was threatened, if she did not confess her crime of heresy. And the stone walls seem to echo her reply: "If you should tear me limb from limb until my soul part company from my body, I can say no more than I have said. And even if forced by pain I should say something else, afterwards I should always declare that you made me say it by force."

That is the great scene we picture as we stand in the old circular stone chamber to-day. It is the first of many which haunt us as we make our way through the streets of Rouen. For the city is permeated with memories of the Maid. Wherever we go we cannot escape her. It is by the Rue Jeanne d'Arc that we pass down into the city. In the cemetery of Saint Ouen, now a public garden, we shall find her again in the presence of her accusers. We shall see the raised platform where her judges are seated, the pulpit from which William

Erard addresses her, browbeats her, terrifies her, and all this under the very shadow of the dwelling of that merciful God whom they, like their victim, profess to serve and follow. It is a wonderful thought that these very walls once looked down upon the pale, terrified girl, as, when at last face to face with the executioner waiting to lead her to the stake, she gave way, crying out that all she had said about her voices and saints was false, and promising that she would never again dress as a man; that she would say what they wished, if only they would not give her over to the English to be burned, as though she had been a witch. Then back to her prison she goes, where her woman's clothes are taken from her, and she is forced once more to put on her armour, and so break her word. And thus we come to the dark, ancient Rue Saint Romain, and the Archbishop's palace with its old chapel, in which, as a tablet on the outer wall informs us, the final trial took place, when Jeanne carried out to the letter the assurance she had made six months earlier when threatened with the instruments of torture. It was under a torture worse than that with which she had been threatened that she had made her recantation; now she withdrew it, was solemnly excommunicated, and given over to the mercy of her bitter foes.

We had been dining as usual at the Restaurant de Paris. Everyone knows the quaint little place, nestling up against the archway of the Grosse Horloge. Lying as it does under the very shadow

of the ancient belfry of the city, this eating-house may, for all I know, be the successor of some far more ancient hostel, for here was situated the Porte Massacre, one of the original gates of Rouen. If so, what guests have not put up at this house! I think I felt this, for, in spite of the brilliant electric lights and the gay young students who thronged the low-ceiled rooms, I used to find myself constantly dreaming of the past. Once, in a top window of the high house which has grown up over the archway of the Grosse Horloge, I saw a face looking down, a white ghostly face, and for a moment wondered if it was some watcher who had taken up her position there to view the passing of the Maid. Perhaps it was the sound of many footsteps in the crowded street below which brought back so vividly the remembrance of that May morning, when Joan was led forth to meet her fate. It was by this ancient road that she came, for it led through the city gate straight to the place of execution.

She had wept and torn her hair when they came in the early morning and told her that she was to be burned that day; she had even cried out that her voices had deceived her. But very soon she had become calmer. Strangely enough, her arch enemy, Pierre Cauchon, had given permission for this so-called witch and heretic to receive Holy Communion before being led to the stake. And though the order had been accompanied by the injunction that It was to be taken to the prison secretly, It was carried by many of the clergy,

walking in procession with lighted torches, and singing litanies. This concession had been a great comfort to the poor girl, as was also the presence and help of the Dominican monk Martin Ladvenu; and when, dressed once more in women's clothes, she mounted the cart which was to bear her to her dreadful death, she had appeared calm and resigned.

On this last evening of our stay in Rouen, having made our way down into the crowded street, we followed the route by which that cart took its way to the place of execution. As we passed beneath the belfry the bell *Cache Ribaud* tolled the curfew, and, had it not been that it was nine o'clock of the evening instead of morning, I should have fancied it was sounding the death-knell for the passing of the Maid. When we reached the market-square, which in 1431 was the place of so much suffering, and groping, had found the slab that marks the site of the scaffold, looking off to the east out of the darkness emerges a ghostly procession. As it nears us we see that it is the death-cart drawn by four horses. In it stands Jeanne, in a rough, sulphur-coloured gown, and crowned with a parchment mitre on which are the words: "Heretic. Relapsed Apostate. Idolater." But, instead of shouts of execration, there are sobs and exclamations of pity. For the dark square seems once more crowded with forms gathered to see the burning of this Maid of Orleans, whose only crime is that she saved their France from the English invaders, and crowned



A STREET NEAR THE CATHEDRAL, ROUEN



THE CHURCH OF ST. MACLOU, ROUEN

their King at Rheims. Presently, as she reaches the place and sees the crowd, the judges on their gorgeous stage, the scaffold, the executioner, we hear her pitiful cry: "Ah, Rouen, Rouen, and is it here that I must die?" There follows a sermon from one of her judges, a speech from Cauchon, the reading of the sentence, and her voice begging for the prayers and pity of all present, and that so sweetly, so humbly, that even Cauchon weeps; and when she begins to mount the high stone scaffold on which the wood has been piled the soldiers have much ado to keep back the crowd.

After that it is all horror and tears. We see her bound to the stake, asking meekly for a cross, and a soldier binding two sticks together, which she places in her bosom. And the fire is lighted, and the monk Ladvenu stands beside her, consoling her, holding up a crucifix he has fetched from the neighbouring church of Saint Sauveur, till she bids him descend, or he too will be burned. Then the flames close in upon her, the darkness falls around us once more, and we find ourselves alone in the haunted market-place of Rouen.

But this took place five centuries ago. For all that time the memory of Jeanne d'Arc has clung about the streets of the city. Histories, stories, poems, plays have been written about her. And now in these latter days she has received her final tribute of honour. Even on the day of her death, Jean Tressart, the secretary of the King of England, cried aloud, when all was over: "We are lost, we

are lost, for a Saint has been burned to death this day!" And it is this Saint Jeanne d'Arc that we shall find in the beautiful chapel lately dedicated to her in the cathedral of Notre-Dame hard by the place of her martyrdom.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHÂTEAU GAILLARD

EVERYONE who has made his way up the Seine will have noticed a great ruined castle frowning down from the precipitous rock which dominates the little village of Le Petit Andely. I well remember how it startled me when, for the first time, I rounded the corner and saw the ghastly skeleton of feudal times, with its empty sockets and riven flanks, glaring down upon me. We were on our way to Saint Germain, and it was growing late, so we fled past without stopping; but ever since I have wished to visit Château Gaillard, and more than ever since I have learned the story of the siege.

A few months ago we were staying at Rouen, and had driven out with some friends, threading our way through narrow, winding lanes, bordered by apple orchards, and past thatched white-walled cottages, with here and there the old stone spire of a Norman church showing above the trees. We had noticed a lonely-looking château called, I think, Pont Saint Pierre, and had already left it some distance behind, when we came upon Les Andelys.

Here we stopped for a cup of coffee as an excuse to visit the wonderful old inn, once the country residence of François de Harley, Archbishop of Rouen. We were fortunate enough to arrive at a quiet time, and to find the landlord at home. He was naturally extremely proud of his splendid inn, and invited us to see the interior, showing us a huge old bedroom in which we might find our fill of ghosts; for it was in this House of the Stag that the father of Henry of Navarre breathed his last; that Sir Walter Scott stayed; and Victor Hugo, and many other persons we should like to have met. And there is the fine Gothic church, built in the thirteenth century, on the site of a much older worshipping place. For Le Grand Andely is a very ancient town, and if we want to see the origin of it we must find our way to the Fountain of Saint Clothilde.

I am sure that we shall all remember the beautiful story of the marriage of this princess with Clovis, the pagan King of the Franks: and as Les Andelys was once her favourite home, and indeed owes its very existence to her, I may perhaps be excused for recalling the ancient story. She was the niece of the Burgundian King Gondebaud; and Clovis, then a young man, full of ambition, and on the lookout for a wife, hearing that she was as wise and good as she was beautiful and rich, asked her of her uncle. It turned out a most happy marriage, and it was in this beautiful spot we are visiting that the young couple had their favourite home—one of those huge

wooden farmhouses that the Merovingian kings called their palaces. It was most likely here that their first little son was born. The Queen, being a Christian, naturally wished him to be baptised; but Clovis, afraid of offending his gods, for a time resisted, and when, having given way, the baby died shortly after the ceremony, the King, overwhelmed with grief, attributed his loss to the wrath of his pagan deities. However, a second son was born, and baptised and lived, "owing to the prayers of his mother": and shortly afterwards Clovis became a Christian. It happened in this wise:—During a battle in the Rhine valley this great warrior actually found himself being worsted, and in his despair, raising his hands to heaven, cried aloud: "Jesus Christ, whom Clothilde declares to be the Son of the Living God, You who they say succour those that are in danger, and bring victory to those who trust in You, help me to triumph over these my enemies, and I will make trial of your power, I will believe in You, I will be baptised in your Name." Scarcely had he spoken when the tide of battle turned, the danger was past, and the King and his followers prepared to fulfil the vow he had made. There follows the splendid story of the baptism at Reims, the old cathedral hung with rich tapestries, the candles, the clouds of incense, the chanting of the monks. And in the midst Clovis is kneeling with his warriors; and Remi, the saintly Archbishop, is telling them how for the future they "must adore what they had burned, and burn

what they had adored!" After this we may be sure that the home at Grand Andely became happier than ever; husband and wife being of one faith.

There was a fountain close to their house to which no doubt even in pagan days people had come in hope of a cure. It may have been the beloved Archbishop of Reims himself who exorcised and blessed the little spring, as it was certainly Clothilde who built the chapel above, and gave it her name, which it still bears after more than a thousand years. It is shadowed by a lime-tree, and every 2nd of June pilgrims come, as of old, to drink from and bathe in the Fountain of Saint Clothilde, and to offer up their prayers or thanksgivings in the church hard by.

I love to think of the royal couple dwelling in their beautiful home beside the Seine, and building the abbey to which, as Bede tells us, the great families of England and France sent their daughters to be educated. The convent was provided with a little port on the river, called Petit Andely, to which the barges came laden with food and where pilgrims landed. It was a quiet and beautiful little spot this home of Clovis and his good Queen, and so remained, till the early Norman pirates came and destroyed it, wrecking the convent, and no doubt murdering the nuns. But the Dukes of Normandy, after their conversion, took the place under their protection, built up the church, and restored to the clergy the surrounding villages,

placing over the district the Archbishop of Rouen, as Lord of Les Andelys.

At Petit Andely, charming little riverside village, we left the motor and climbed the steep hillside to the ruined fortress, the Saucy Castle, as Richard Cœur de Lion called it, as for the first time he looked down from his window upon the helpless town and open country lying at his mercy below, and defied his enemy the King of France, the great Philip Augustus. It was during a truce, which had been arranged between the two kings, that Richard had built this amazing fortress on an isolated rock at a sharp angle of the river Seine. A wondrous place it must have seemed, with its enormous ditches cut in the living rock, its triple fortifications, its thick walls, and mighty donjon keep. Even to-day we might well wonder how it could ever have been captured did we not know the story of the siege.

Realising that with this gate to Rouen in the hands of the English, Paris itself, and indeed all his kingdom, would be at the mercy of his enemies, Philip resolved to lay siege to Château Gaillard. The first step was to gain possession of Boutavant, the fortified island lying in the Seine, the next to capture Le Petit Andely, and so cut off communication with the river and all outside help. The fortress was defended by Sir Roger de Lacy and a little band of picked knights for eight terrible winter months. They might have held out even longer, had not the poor country folk, at the approach of the French army, taken refuge within the walls. When the

food was all but gone, they had to be expelled, five hundred of them, old men, women, and helpless children, whom the French soldiers shot down with arrows, till King Philip gave the order for the remnant to pass.

After that, little by little, the French mounted the hill, and surrounded the castle. Then the miners got to work, a tower fell, the huge fortress itself with its walls and inner walls was entered, and Sir Roger, with the few soldiers left to him, was taken and shot. To-day, how still it is! how deserted!

We clamber up to the ruin, and enter through the Sally port to find ourselves in the innermost recesses of Richard's Saucy Castle . . . and yet not quite! For, wandering over the broken ground, we reach an opening and descend into the vaults below the tower. What gruesome scenes has not this gloomy prison witnessed? I wondered whether it could have been here that the unfortunate and guilty Queen Marguerite de Bourgogne, wife of Louis the Tenth, was strangled in 1314! We shall never know. But we can still read the story of the two young queens (Marguerite, the wife of Louis le Hutin, and Jeanne, the wife of Philippe le Longue), who, together with Blanche, lately married to Charles de la Marche, had been arrested and cast into prison at the instigation of the wicked and jealous Queen Isabelle of England, wife and murderess of King Edward the Second. We shall never know, or wish to know, the story of these

women's crimes, if crimes they committed! But we think of them as we stand in the black prison below the donjon of Château Gaillard. I wanted to explore the dreadful place, but their ghosts seemed to wave me back, and I hastened out into the sunshine and fresh air, thankful that I lived in the twentieth century, and had been allowed to choose my own husband, instead of being born a wretched fourteenth-century princess, obliged to marry a king like Louis the Tenth.

A few years later, Château Gaillard was the refuge of the boy David Bruce, granted to him by King Philip the Sixth, when he fled from his country at the coming of Balliol. Later we find Henry the Fifth of England besieging the castle, which would have resisted for more than the sixteen months that it did hold out, had not the ropes of the bucket which brought the water up from the deep well given out. . . .

Since then the old castle has no story to tell. It lives in its past, and we who visit it do so for the sake of the memories its sight recalls. We look down over the Seine, and think of those long dead kings and queens, till the sun begins to sink, and the river to flow blood red, as it flowed in those ancient days of which we have been thinking, when human life was so little accounted of in comparison with power and glory.

## CHAPTER V

### EVREUX

A DULL, little town is Evreux at first sight, with no history to speak of with certainty before the tenth century, though doubtless, like all the cities of France, it was a place of some importance long before that time, for we hear of a local Saint named Taurin, said to have been a disciple of Denis the Areopagite, having brought Christianity to the neighbourhood, and founded a little church there of which he was appointed bishop. But little is known of Saint Taurin, and even the place of his sepulchre was lost, until a certain fifth-century bishop, named Landulf, found the body of the old man buried beside the Roman road, on the outskirts of the town. He built over it a small wooden oratory, which later developed into the church and Benedictine Abbey of Saint Taurin.

We were on our way to Lisieux, to witness some of the ceremonies connected with the recent canonisation of The Little Flower of Jesus, as the new Saint of Lisieux is called by the Catholic world. Having been warned by our landlady in Rouen that

we should not find a spare corner in which to sleep, we made up our minds to stop short at Evreux, putting up at the Hôtel du Grand Cerf.

It was a pretty enough place in the afternoon sunlight, the house itself built round a long courtyard full of flowers, begonias, fuchsias, geraniums, and curtains of wistaria hanging from every wall. In the corners lurked many porcelain beasts. Blue and yellow cats prowled about the roof, geese strutted among the flowers, a huge bulldog of ferocious aspect kept guard in a kennel beside the door. By day it was amusing; but later, when I looked down from my window, and saw the strangely coloured creatures creeping about in the moonlight, it was a weird sight, reminding one of a curious and horrible story by Blackwood about a night he passed in a city of cats, and the horrors that there befell him.

Evreux lies in a hollow closed in by hills, save to the west. It was market day, and after dinner we strolled through the town, which was crowded with country folk, for it is the centre of a large and rich agricultural district.

The streets were gay and noisy, so after a time we wandered away from the main thoroughfare to find ourselves before the ancient church of Saint Taurin. The door was open, and there was still light enough to see the painted windows illustrating the life of the bishop, and his curious chase in which his bones are kept, to be carried in procession on the day of his festival.

But the principal church, the cathedral, we visited next morning before setting out on our way to Lisieux. It is a most curious and beautiful building, belonging to the twelfth century, very possibly built in part by Henry the First of England, in reparation for the damage he had done to the original building. To me the great delight of visiting these ancient churches is that in them one always finds written in stone the records of the past. For instance, as one sits looking up at the beautiful arches and soaring pillars of this cathedral, marking how the various styles of architecture succeed one another, we are reminded of the wild years through which Evreux has passed. Of the siege and burning of the city in 1119, when the original church was practically destroyed. Of its restoration by Henry Beauclerc, the chief incendiary, and its consecration by his friend Bishop Audouin.

The period succeeding the Norman Conquest was not a happy time for either England or France, for both sides were struggling for possession of this rich province, and cities passed from hand to hand, according to the will of those in high places, the people being mere pawns in the game, as likely as not ruled by foreigners, who did not know the language of those they governed. There was the wretched John Lackland, afterwards King John of England, who, as ruler of Normandy, held the town under his suzerain King Philip Augustus. Horrible stories are told of his barbarous cruelty, such as that of the great banquet given to the French

knights in the castle of Evreux. Three hundred of these gentlemen had accepted the invitation, and the feast was at its height when they were set upon and murdered in cold blood by the servants of John, and their heads hung in festoons from the ramparts. But at last, happily, the county of Evreux was united to France, given by John as a marriage portion to his niece Blanche of Castille, on her marriage with Louis the Eighth, then the Dauphin. We so often hear of this strong-minded and pious daughter of Alphonso the Ninth of Castille, as we travel about France, that I may be pardoned for saying a few words about her here, especially as, through her marriage, she finally united the county of Evreux to the monarchy of France.

She was not too good friends with her father-in-law, King Philip Augustus: they were both strong-willed almost to obstinacy! There is an amusing little story told by a thirteenth-century writer of a passage of arms between the two. Louis, her husband, was in great straits for money to carry on his campaign in England, and his father, always avaricious, had refused his help.

"And will you let your son, my lord, die in a foreign country for want of funds to carry on the war?" she cried. "For God's sake, sire, help him! He ought to reign after you. Give him, in the first place, what actually belongs to him."

"I will send him nothing at all, Blanche," replied Philip.

"Nothing, sire?"

"In truth nothing!"

"Then, by God," cried Madame Blanche, "I know what I myself will do! I have two beautiful children belonging to my lord. I shall pawn them. I shall easily find someone ready to lend me money on them!" and off she went like a mad woman.

But the King sent to call her back, and, "Blanche, said he, "I will give *you* as much as you wish from my treasure. You can do with it what you please, but, understand, that to *him* I send nothing."

Her son Louis was but twelve years of age when his father, by that time Louis the Eighth, died, and Queen Blanche found herself with a long regency before her. She was certainly a wonderful woman, for the country, divided as it had been at her coming, was, by the time her son came of age, a united kingdom. But the picture given by the *Sieur de Joinville* of the royal household shows Blanche as being distinctly difficult to live with! It was she herself who arranged her son's marriage with Margaret of Provence; but once it was accomplished, the poor young couple were obliged to meet by stealth, so jealous was this royal mother-in-law. It is the same chronicler, the *Sieur de Joinville*, who relates how, at Pontoise, the rooms occupied by the young people lay one above the other, a winding staircase offering the only means of communication; in this uncomfortable place the poor young couple would meet and talk in whispers, while sympathetic doorkeepers watched without to

warn them of the jealous Queen Mother's approach, when they would escape to their respective rooms to await her coming!

It was not until after his mother's death that Louis began to exercise his own will, or to travel about and visit his kingdom. Then it was that he brought his wife to Evreux; and I like to think of them sitting side by side in the beautiful cathedral, presiding at the installation of the new bishop, Raoul de Gropalmy, or kneeling at the altar rail to receive the Blessed Sacrament from his hands.

In those days the woods lay thick around Evreux; and the Abbess of Saint Sauveur, a very aristocratic lady, and her nuns, used to hunt the stag in the forest of Asnières, in company with a certain William d'Ivry and other gentlemen of the neighbourhood. Indeed, we are told that on one occasion the poor stag, being hard pressed by the huntsmen, and having taken to the river, "the nuns had the pleasure of seeing it die!"

Within a short drive from Evreux is Ivry, the scene of the great battle between Henry of Navarre and the army of the League. Here in this plain of Saint André, in the midst of which rises the pyramid recording the victory, were gathered the forces of the opposing kings. I suppose that in childhood we all learned the Lay of the Battle of Ivry, and pictured the King arriving "all in his armour drest," and marked how he had "bound a snow-white plume upon his gallant crest." I have no great affection for Henry of Navarre: he was too

theatrical and time-serving for my taste. Three times he changed his religion for political purposes, and his private history is by no means an elevating subject to dwell upon. But, like all God's creatures, he had his uses, and he was a great and popular monarch, and, above all, a great general.

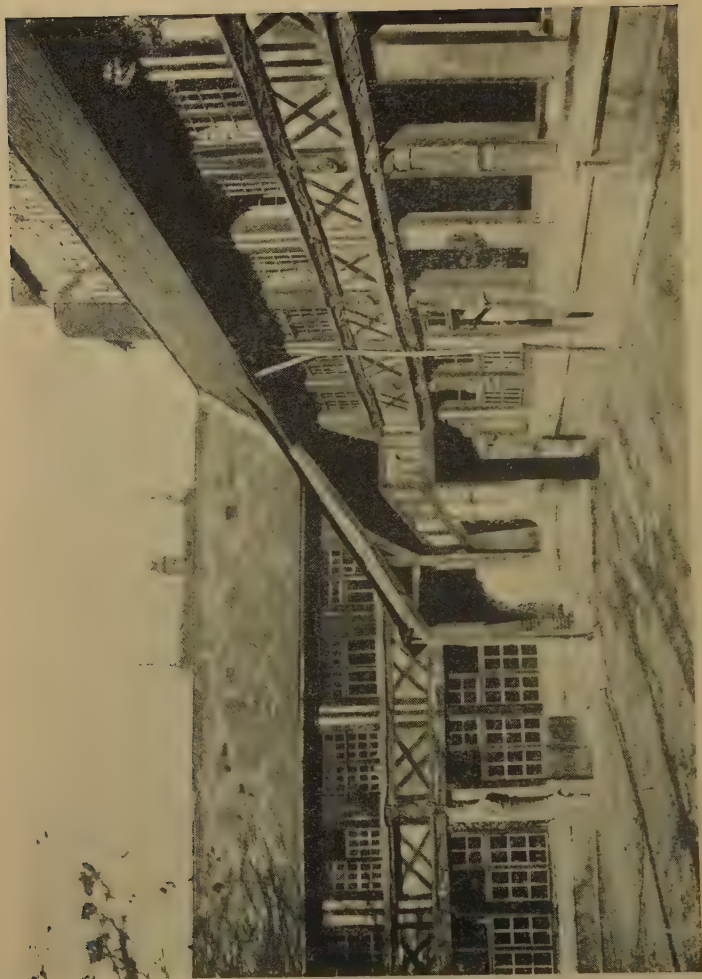
His military skill he probably owed to the fact that his mother Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, took him at an early age to Rochelle, to learn the art of war under the great Admiral Coligny. His reputation as a monarch was probably much enhanced by the very poor qualities of the three or four kings who preceded him. Thinking somewhat in this manner, as we look across the plain we can see the ranks of the League breaking, "like thin clouds against a Biscay gale," as the ballad has it; and "the field is heaped with bleeding steeds and flags and cloven mail"; indeed, the whole scene, as pictured by Macaulay, is very fine and stirring, and years ago at school one thoroughly enjoyed reciting the rousing rhymes and rhythm.

But we have heard too much lately of bleeding horses and cloven skulls, and crushed and shattered bodies, to appreciate such poems to-day. It is said that more than four thousand of the army of the League lay dead or dying after the battle—a huge number for those days—while Henry and his staff departed in the highest spirits to the Castle of Rosny, there to sup and pass the night in comfort.

The castle belonged to Maximilien de Bethune, better remembered as Duke of Sully; indeed, it was



THE TOUR DE BEURRE, NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL, ROUEN



L'AITRE DE S. MACLOU, ROUEN

his birthplace. Everyone who has heard of Sully will remember his boundless devotion to the King, his master, whose service he had entered when little more than a boy. He had felled and sold the finest timber in his park at Rosny, to provide funds for the young man. For years he managed his finances; no easy task, when we remember the hosts of greedy courtiers and rapacious women who formed the Court of Henry the Fourth. And it was to the home of this faithful servant that Henry was making his way, when he overtook a little band of wounded soldiers limping along on their road to the castle, bearing in their midst the wounded body of the Duke of Sully. Springing from his horse, Henry embraced his friend, and then, remounting, continued his way to Rosny, where he dined in public with his officers, delighting everyone with his jokes and merry stories, some of which, we may be sure, were not of the most refined order, judging by the literature of the period.

Next morning, before leaving Evreux, we went to the cathedral to study it by morning light. We found it empty, save for a few women who had been to early Mass, and were kneeling, saying their prayers. It was a fine morning, and the sun shone in through the beautiful painted windows, so that the eastern end, lofty, broad, and perfect, was full of light and colour, while the great sanctuary gates, which the evening before had been closed, were now open. And, as I stood gazing into this radiant and

holy place, I thought what artists the old monk-architects must have been to interpret so perfectly in stone the faith which animated them, and how hopeless it is in these days to seek to emulate them. And then I seemed to see the great building filled once more with the anxious crowds who fled to it in times of peril and stress, and to hear the prayers and litanies; while the sun, streaming in through the windows, reminded me of the glow of the flames which again and again destroyed the city in ancient times. And yet here, on its original site, stands the church, more beautiful than ever, a fitting emblem of the Faith of those who raised it.

## CHAPTER VI

### LISIEUX

I SUPPOSE that, whatever may be our religious beliefs and practices, there are few of us who have not heard of that latest of Saints, Thérèse of Lisieux, called more commonly, at least by Catholics, The Little Flower of Jesus. It was our landlady at Rouen who insisted on our being present at the great week-long festival of her canonisation. And, indeed, as we were in Normandy at the time, and wishful to see the old city in her holiday attire, we were nothing loth.

“It would be absurd, a thing unheard of,” cried she, “for Madame to find herself in Normandy, and not to assist at a ceremony so unique. What would your friends say on your return to England? I myself am not *une dévote*; I am not for ever running to this shrine or that directly I have a toothache or a pain in my stomach, as some would. But The Little Flower, *par exemple*. That is another thing. Does Madame know her history?”

I replied that I had read it as I read the stories of most Saints, but that I was more interested in

the past than in the present. It was of no use, however; I was literally swept off my feet by Madame's enthusiasm, and next morning found myself struggling into a train already crowded with pilgrims of every age, quality, and sex, on their way to assist at the ceremonies to be held at Lisieux, in honour of the Canonisation of Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin, as she was named at her baptism. The crowd was still as thick as ever on the platform, and fresh people kept arriving every moment. There were country priests shepherding old women from distant hamlets. There were mothers with babies and young daughters, convent schools, timid black-gowned nuns, Brothers of Saint Joseph with their pupils, in socks and little short breeches, their black cloth capes flung back over their shoulders, and even here and there a friar, brown-robed and sandalled, his big rosary dangling at his side. It is needless to say that we were somewhat crowded and late in starting; but we sat there enjoying it all, for it reminded us of those long-past days when we used to frequent the Breton Pardons with our friend Anatole le Braz. There was the same atmosphere of fervour and devotion, rare to see in these days. I remarked upon it to a woman who sat beside me telling her beads.

"But naturally," she replied, looking up with a smile, "she is our own, this Little Flower. There are some who can even remember when she was living at the Carmel at Lisieux. And ever since she left us she has been our protector. In the

Great War what should we poor French women have done without her? Madame is English? Ah, then, perhaps she has never heard what our Saint said to her sister Pauline during her last illness. 'I will spend my heaven,' said she, 'in doing good on earth'; and has she not kept her word?"

As we neared the old city I am afraid the occasion of our visit faded for a moment from my memory as I looked out over this Noviomagus Lexoviorum which gave so much trouble to the Romans. A wild, savage people these Lexovii must have been in those days. It is even said that on one occasion the Senate having attempted to quell a revolt which had broken out against the Roman rule, the Gaulish citizens fell upon them and cut all their throats! It is one of the most ancient cities of Normandy, and, in spite of their early resistance to their conquerors, the people in the end became good Roman citizens, and were one of the sixty cities of Gaul who raised a statue to Augustus.

Duke Rollo at his coming showed himself a generous patron to Lisieux, and the bishop became a very great person; so great, indeed, that even the canons shared in his reflected glory. It is told of them that every year, on the day of the Feast of Saint Ursin, two of these clergy of the cathedral rode forth on horseback, followed by twenty-five men-at-arms, and all the high officers of justice, and took command of the city and its gates for two days, during which time they judged all causes, both civil and criminal, and held the right to give

the benefices of the diocese to whom they chose. Like all the cities of Normandy, Lisieux has had a stormy past, so in this respect its history does not differ greatly from that of its neighbours. It has seen the same people of whom we have spoken elsewhere, walking its streets and worshipping in its churches. It was at Lisieux that King Richard of England had that touching interview with his rebellious brother John, who had been doing his best to betray him to his enemy King Philip Augustus. When the young man, afraid of approaching the brother he had so grievously offended, cast himself at his feet: "Do not be afraid, John," said Richard; "you are but a child, and have been in bad company. It is they who shall pay for what you have done. Come, get up, and let us have something to eat." Then, turning to one of his knights, "What is there for dinner?" he asked; and hearing that someone had just brought him a salmon as a present, "then you shall have that," said he to John, and ordered it to be cooked forthwith. That is one of the little sidelights on the history of Lisieux. It was at Lisieux that the father and mother of these two young men had been married. We shall think of them when we visit the cathedral.

In the old Abbey of Saint Evroul, close by, the Monk Orderic Vital wrote his entrancing *History of Normandy*, from which we learn so much of these old cities. And there is that bold bishop Thomas Basin, who, for the sake of his Church and his people, dared to defy the dreaded Louis the

Eleventh himself. We think also of the great Archbishop Thomas à Becket, who, during his exile from England, lived near Lisieux as Abbot of the monastery of Val Richer, and left certain of his vestments behind, which may be seen in the Hospice in the Rue de Paris. But, after all, we have come to Lisieux to attend the Fête, and we are reminded of the fact, directly we leave the station, by the great arches of evergreen, starred with roses of every colour, which span the Rue Alençon and the Rue Pont Mortain, through which we pass. For the city is "endimanchée," indeed, this late September morning, and as for the churches they are even more gorgeously apparelled. The entrance to the cathedral Saint Pierre is wreathed with these same roses, emblematical of the little heroine of the day, the long trails being festooned with the stately flags of the French Republic.

It is a beautiful cathedral this of Lisieux, reminding one, with its narrow, pointed arches and lancet windows, and general purity, perhaps I should say severity of style, of Saint Hugh's great church at Lincoln.

In the choir Henry the Second of England was married to Eleanor of Guienne, and this Lady Chapel was rebuilt by the Bishop of Beuvais, Pierre Cauchon, in expiation, as is alleged, for his false judgment of Joan of Arc. The bas-reliefs with which it is decorated tell the story of his horrible crime, but whether this money-loving prelate paid for the building himself is very problematical.

The hotels appeared so crowded, even at that early hour, and the menus posted up at the doors so uninviting, that we turned away to find a confectioner's or baker's, and soon came across a nice, clean little shop, whose mistress, foreseeing extra business, had fitted up her parlour on the first floor as a tiny restaurant. It was fortunate that we were neither of us stout, for the staircase leading to it was so narrow that otherwise we might have stuck on the ascent. We sat at a little white-clothed table by the window, and devoured ham and bread and butter and cakes, and took a photograph of the west end of the cathedral, and watched the crowds going up and down the great stairway to the entrance; and then, as it still wanted some time to the hour of Vespers, we made our way to the church of Saint Jacques, the other great church of Lisieux. How lovely it is this strange, old fifteenth-century building! Every pillar, those graceful pillars whose mouldings passing upward as it seems instinctively, without the intervention of a capital, to form the ribbing of the vaulted roof, every pillar bears to-day a long silk pennon, gold or crimson, embroidered with flowers, crosses, fleurs-de-lis; and the triforium, exquisite, lacelike gallery that it is, is festooned with delicate green wreathing, starred with pink roses. Over the high altar is a picture of the little Saint herself, framed with her favourite flowers; and at the entrance to the choir all the glory and radiance of colour incarnate culminates in showers and cascades of

blossoms, as though the little Carmelite were fulfilling her dying promise. For awhile we wandered about this beautiful building, watching the picturesque worshippers kneeling in the light of the sheaves of candles before the statue of Our Lady, and pausing before the old picture showing "How the relics of Monseigneur Saint Ursin were brought by a miracle to this town in 1055 by the care of Hugo, Bishop of Lisieux."

And then, it being half-past two, we returned to the cathedral for Vespers, to find it already packed from end to end. However, going round to the south-west door, we managed to effect an entrance, and little by little threaded our way into the south transept, taking up our stand at the foot of one of the huge pillars of the intersection. There we were able at least to lean, for there was by this time not the faintest possibility of finding a seat, the whole floor space being packed solid with human feet, fitting into one another like a Chinese puzzle.

How beautiful the ancient church looked in all the glory of its festival trappings! From a hole in the centre of the intersection depended a huge crown of flowers, and from this hung long showers of roses looped back to the four great pillars. Just within the choir lay the chasse, and above and below and on every side were lights and flowers and music and the rejoicing of crowds, who had come from far and near to do homage to this humble little Normandy maiden. At every moment the crowd pressed closer, grew denser. One would have

said it was not possible, but here and there a child was slipped in, a woman squeezed through, till at last, when the way had to be cleared for the Procession of Bishops, we were forced to climb up on to the old stone base of our column, and from thence were able to watch the stream of Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, and other clergy, make their gorgeous way through the crowd and up the central aisle to the choir. There, after bowing humbly to the chasse, they passed and took the seats reserved for them. For the rest I cannot describe it: it remains in my memory a glory of lights and flowers, of rich vestments and sparkling jewels, of music and rejoicing, and all in honour of the simple, humble childlike maiden of whom we were all thinking.

For my part, as I sat perched on the worn base of the pillar, listening to the story of the life of this wonderful child, as told by the Archbishop of Rouen, I thought a good deal of that other Saint, whose history we had been studying lately at Rouen, and wondered which of the two had achieved the nobler work—Joan, who saved her country from the tyranny of an earthly foe; or this silent little Carmelite who gave up her life to pray France back from the still more terrible thralldom of sin and unbelief. I thought of her as a little motherless girl, living with her widowed father and sisters at Lisieux, and of her childish wish to devote her life to prayer at the convent in which two of her sisters were already professed.

A well-known modern writer, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, has given a graphic account of his visit to the Festival, and describes the chapel of the convent where the final celebrations were held, showing us the wax figure of Thérèse lying in its "arch of crystal," the profusion of stucco flowers and paper roses. He confesses that there are too many of these for his taste; but suggests that the little Saint herself, who had a special preference for these flowers, would have loved it all in her childish, humble fashion. For, indeed, she was such a child, only fifteen at the time she entered the convent, only twenty-four when she died. "Just a little, pious, imaginative girl," as the same writer observes, "who, like God Himself, regarded the purity of a gift rather than its value."

## CHAPTER VII

### CAEN

How many years is it since I first visited Caen? We were living at Worthing at the time, and holidays abroad were rare and precious, for we were young married people, and had to be sparing with our pennies. So when, one day, we heard of a little steamer which was making cheap week-end trips between Newhaven and Caen, we thought it an occasion not to be lost, and wrote for berths.

But that is all so long ago; and we have wandered so far and so often since then that I remember very little of what befell us. I recall a very tiny boat, rocking and heaving beside the quay; rough, grey, foam-flecked water; and hours and hours of discomfort, when I sat in a deck-chair with my eyes shut, not daring to move, and thinking how comfortable I might have been at home. And there was night in a stuffy cabin, with intervals of sleep, and awaking . . . to find oneself in smooth water, and to see, through the portholes, the green banks and willows which border the canal that leads from the sea to the city.

Of the Bassin Saint Pierre into which we must have emerged, and even of the old city itself, I recollect from that visit but little, save a very ancient and dirty inn, the name of which I have fortunately forgotten, a confused network of narrow, evil-smelling streets, and a great Norman church in which I was told William the Conqueror was buried.

To-day, how different is my memory of Caen. True, it is wiser to keep one's mouth shut, especially when passing through the back streets and purlieus of the harbour. But it is a charmingly picturesque place, this favourite home of William and his wife Matilda of Flanders.

According to ancient writers, Caen was originally a mere fishing village, lying on the banks of the river Orne. Some authorities suggest that its name Cadomus was of Roman origin (Caii Domus), others allege that it is derived from the Celtic form Catumagos (field of battle), a third quote Catheim, from Gate-heim (the house of the barrier), because it was here that the old Roman road, leading from Lisieux to Bayeux, crossed the river. This crossing place was a valuable possession, on account of the fees charged for the use of the ferry; and Duke Richard III, uncle of William the Conqueror, gave Catheim to his wife Adèle as a marriage gift. By that time it must have become quite a little town, for the deed of gift mentions "churches, mills, tolls, as well as the harbour with its dues, and the surrounding meadows, vineyards, and cornfields."

We shall remember how this young Duke was

poisoned by his brother Robert the Magnificent, or Robert the Devil, concerning whom so many strange and romantic stories have been told. We shall find them, together with other wonderful things, in the beautiful old library of Caen, where we used to sit reading and dreaming for so many hours. It is one of the most delightful and inspiring libraries that I know, not too large or crowded, and with a restful charm about it which accords well with the ancient city. Together with the museum, picture-gallery, and certain municipal offices, it once formed part of an ancient convent, and a quiet studious charm enfolds one as one enters the door. I think that the first long room must once have been a chapel. It is on the upper floor, and its windows look down over the courtyard. The walls are lined with ancient books, over which generations of monks have pored; while down the centre of the long apartment are glass cases containing priceless missals, breviaries, and other ecclesiastical treasures, fortunate enough to have escaped the fury of the Revolution. It is all so beautiful, so quiet and studious, that one still feels as if it were a sacred place, and hushes one's footsteps across the glistening, polished floor. Beyond the first hall, through a broad opening, lies the reading-room, also lined with books, and furnished with delightful attendants, to whom it is apparently a pleasure, rather than a duty, to help you in your particular wants. Legend, history, biography, architecture, they know far better than yourself

what you need and in what corner the volumes lurk. And the sun shines in through the tall windows, and you sit in your comfortable chair at one of the great leather-covered tables, and read and read and read. It is time and memory that fail, not information, for you have only to mention the subject in which you are interested, and in a few moments you find yourself furnished with every detail.

One could spend years in the library of Caen and yet feel that one was only beginning to know the story of the old city. Packed away on the shelves are legends, half fact, half fable, such as the story of the Viking Lothric and his son Bier the Invulnerable. A wild saga is that. It tells of his birth, and how his mother, who must have been something of a witch, rubbed his body with all manner of poisons as soon as he was born, so that ever after he could not be wounded. And there are stories of his journeys with Hasting. How they gathered an army of young Northmen together, and after building a fleet of ships and collecting weapons, armour, and provisions, set off in the name of their god Thor to conquer a new country for themselves. We read of the early dukes, too—the strange, half-mythical rulers of Normandy—of their rough wooings, their marriages, which they celebrated “after the Danish manner.” Then we seem to emerge suddenly into the dawn of history, when, as we have seen, Rollo embraced Christianity, and churches began to arise, cities to be fortified,

laws to be enforced. And so we come to the days of William the Conqueror. But it was still a very different land from the Normandy of to-day, and we need to pore long over the ancient stories before we can begin to realise what it must have been like when Duke William and his wife came to dwell in the new castle they had built on the hill at Caen. This William is always in our thoughts; whether we are walking through the narrow streets of the town, or sitting in the stillness of the library, he seems constantly at our side. His portrait, as I have said, confronts us on the great staircase: his statue dominates the gardens: his church and that of his wife are among the principal objects of interest in Caen.

Why William fixed upon Caen as his favourite abode, and chose it as his burial-place, I do not know. The first time we find him mentioned in connection with the little town was in the year 1059, when the Duke, then quite young, and staying in his castle of Valongues, passed through Caen on his famous ride to Arques.

He had received the news that his uncle, William of Arches, had joined with the King of France to deprive him of his duchy, and he set forth with all his characteristic energy to chastise him. We can almost hear his furious words as we listen to the old story as told by Wace, who describes how the messenger came spurring on with pressing speed, crying, "Better would it be for thee to be elsewhere! They who guard the frontiers have need of thy



THE CHURCH OF SAINT STEPHEN, CAEN



THE ABBAYE OF ARDENNES

aid; for thy uncle, William of Arches, hath linked himself by oath and affiance with King Henry of France." Then the Duke tarried not till the varlet should speak further, nor indeed till he had well said his say; but called for his good horse. "Now shall I see," said he, "who of you is ready, now shall I see who of you will follow me." And, making no further preparations, he crossed by the fords of Saint Clement, and so through Bayeux and Caen, feigning as though he would go to Rouen. But when he came to Pont Audemer he crossed the Seine and from thence, still hastening, galloped on till he joined his people before Arques, or, as it was called in those days, Arches. And we are told that none of those who took horse with him at Valongues kept up with him, and all wondered how he had come so soon from such a distance. So the first picture we have of William at Caen is of a flying horseman, rushing through the narrow streets, careless of the crowds who turned to stare at him, his one idea, as it was through life, to hold fast what he considered his. And if we go to Dieppe we shall see near by the remains of this famous castle of Arques, or Arches, still standing on its rock, the square donjon with its deep ditch dating from the time of the Normans, and we shall be able to fancy the young Duke gazing up at the battlements and planning how he should begin his attack. But to return to Caen.

The city in those days possessed no castle, and

was still without wall or fence to protect it. But having made up his mind that he liked the place, that it possessed important possibilities, William set to work, in his vigorous fashion, to transform the old fishing village into a fortified city, with a castle, now used as barracks, and two great abbeys, one dedicated to Saint Stephen being at the western extremity of the town, the other founded by his young wife Matilda or Maheut at the eastern end. Nothing can be more magnificent and interesting than these great churches, the one so stern and masculine, the other full of delicate womanly charm. The old streets of the city are wonderful enough, delighting one with their very age and discomfort. But when for the first time we turn off from the Rue Guillaume le Conquerant, and come face to face with the great, gaunt west end of William's church, one leaves the twentieth century behind indeed, to pass back through the ages to that day in the year 1087, when the west doors opened to receive the funeral cortège of the Conqueror of England.

We used often to turn off from the noisy street to wander about in this great church. We found a friendly sacristan, who might well have been a reincarnation of one of the old monks who built this splendid worshipping place. He was a tall, stately, very handsome person, and for all I know to the contrary may once have been the great Lanfranc himself. He found us strolling aimlessly about the nave, and, after inviting us to visit the

ancient sacristy with a portrait of William, invited us up to walk round the huge triforium galleries, from whence we could look down into the choir and nave. It is a wonderful place this triforium, for it has been scarcely touched since its erection, and its details are the purest early Norman. And it is a good place too, to recall the past, to picture Lanfranc and his friend and patron walking and talking familiarly together beneath the massive arches of the groined roof, to watch this future Archbishop of Canterbury passing his hand caressingly over one of these grotesque corbels, as fresh and sharp as when they were first placed there, and pointing out the perfect lines of the mouldings.

Of course the church has been restored, even enlarged; but it is still the Abbaye aux Hommes, which our first Norman King built in expiation for his disobedience to the head of the Church, in marrying Matilda of Flanders, who was said to be related to him on his father's side.

The story of his courtship of the beautiful Maheut has been told so often that the actual facts have probably become somewhat overlaid with fable, but I give it as it is related by the chronicler.

Maheut was the daughter of Baldwin, Count of Flanders, and Adela, who had formerly been married to William's uncle. Hence the relationship difficult! The young Duke, who had succeeded his father Robert the Devil at a very early age, had grown into a tall, proud, handsome young man. When we visit Falaise we shall hear the story of his

birth, which, to tell the truth, was not very reputable, and on the subject of which William was extremely touchy. Duke William and Count Baldwin met at Boulogne to discuss the question of the marriage; and as William was already beginning to make a great stir in the world, and was expected to rise still higher, Baldwin was quite pleased at the idea of having so powerful a young man for a son-in-law and ally, and readily agreed to overlook the unfortunate stain on his birth.

But when Matilda was informed of the matter she was of quite another mind, and at first utterly refused to accept William as a suitor.

“J’aime mieux être nonne voilée  
Que jamais sois à bastard donnée!”

she exclaimed, when she heard of the proposed marriage; or, as another writer says: “Rising, and flushing with indignation, she cried, ‘I, the descendant of Hugh Capet! You must be mad, my father, to think that a King’s granddaughter would marry a man of such birth!’”

I suppose that gossip travelled as quickly in those days as in ours, for, in spite of every precaution, the story soon reached William’s ears, and his rage knew no bounds. One writer tells how he waylaid Matilda as she was coming out of church with her ladies, and beat her in the street, till she lay at his feet half dead and covered with mud. Another, that mounting his horse in a fury, he rode straight to Bruges, made his way into the palace, and,

having found Matilda, seized her by her long hair, and, flinging her down on the ground, beat her till she begged for mercy.

“Le Duc par ses tresses la prit  
Avant de lui dire autre raison  
À ses pieds il l’a jettée, et  
Contre ses éperons tombée  
Il l’a de pieds et de poigns battue  
Au point que peu s’en faut qu’il ne l’a tué.”

The treatment, though drastic, even for the times, appears to have succeeded; and the Count, hearing that William was likely to go far, and even to become King of England, persuaded his daughter to reconsider her determination, and the wedding preparations began.

Dresses in those days were very magnificent, with their jewels, their long knotted sleeves, their embroidered mantles, and the veil that fell over the long hair that was worn streaming over the shoulders. And we may be sure that William was no less magnificent than his bride. A handsome pair they must have made when they were married at Eu in the great church of Notre-Dame. Miss Strickland, quoting from the chronicle of Baudoin d’Avesnes, gives an amusing incident which is said to have occurred at the wedding-feast of these two greatest of Caen worthies. The Duke of Flanders, seeing how well things were going, inquired of his daughter why she had, after all, consented to link her life with that of the man who had subjected her to so rough a wooing. “Ah,” said the bride,

"but you see I did not know him then so well as I do now!"

After the wedding the young couple went first to Rouen, their capital, and then to Caen, where they began to consider the question of the building of the two abbeys, one for men and one for women, which formed part of the penance which the Church had laid upon them in granting forgiveness for the marriage.

It was the monk Lanfranc, afterwards the celebrated Archbishop of Canterbury, of whom we have spoken when visiting that city,<sup>1</sup> whom William chose as his architect, appointing him Abbot of this new monastery of Saint Stephen.

At the other extremity of Caen, Matilda established her beautiful convent and church for women, dedicating it to the Holy Trinity; and around each abbey soon grew up a new walled suburb of Caen, that dominated by Saint Stephen's being called Bourg l'Abbé, the other Bourg l'Abbess.

Thus, in Norman times, the city of Caen consisted of four quarters: the original town of Grand Bourg; the castle with the parish and church of Saint George; and the two new religious districts. Even to-day, after nearly a thousand years, the aspect of Caen is not entirely changed. The two great churches still dominate it as of old, though the monks and nuns have disappeared; and the castle on the height, with its bridge spanning the deep moat, though now used as a barracks, brings

<sup>1</sup> *The Lure of English Cathedrals (Southern).*

back to our thoughts very forcibly those days when William and Matilda held their Court within its gloomy walls.

Their first home had been at Rouen, in the old castle down by the river; but later Caen became their favourite residence; and in the castle Matilda must often have sat at her embroidery, while William, descendant of Vikings as he was, lived his restless, ambitious, dominating life abroad; for, in spite of his great affection for her, Matilda could not have found him a very comfortable husband to live with.

It was at Caen that the celebrated *Trêve de Dieu* was first proclaimed. By it certain abuses were intended to be prevented. No one was to preach in a parish church without permission of the bishop; priests were forbidden to marry; laymen had no right over church property; in time of war the country folk were to be allowed to take "refuge" in the cemeteries. Above all, no one was to make war, or fight in any cause, from Wednesday night till Monday morning, Thursday being sacred to the Ascension of our Lord, Friday to His death, Saturday to His resting in the tomb, and Sunday because it was the day of His resurrection. I am afraid that the kings and nobles of the period did not adhere very strictly to this order of the Church, but it was at least an attempt to mitigate the horrors of war. Later, the duration of the truce was limited to from nine o'clock on Saturday till one on Monday, "so that all men might render what they should to God on the Lord's Day."

At Caen, too, the curfew was first sounded, not so much as a preventive of fire, as a discouragement to those discontented persons who were fond of meeting and plotting after dark by light of fire or candle.

Many are the stories and legends told of the days spent by Duke William and his Duchess at Caen. Their children came quickly, and for the most part turned out badly, giving their father and mother much sorrow, and causing a breach between husband and wife. For Matilda, left much to herself during William's constant warlike expeditions, spoiled her children, particularly Robert, the eldest, who rebelled against his father, claiming the Duchy of Normandy during William's lifetime. She would relieve the wretched, undutiful spendthrift from her own private purse, which gave rise to the well-known scene, when the Duke, entering her room one day, found her searching among her treasures for money to send to her unworthy favourite.

"I have already forbidden you to send him help, Madame," cried the Duke furiously. "By the splendour of God, I believe you would rob *me* to assist him!"

But if we would meet Matilda at Caen we must make our way to the Abbaye aux Dames, the great church of which remains in almost the same condition as on the day when the Queen was laid there to rest. Her daughter Cecilia was the first nun professed there, and was no doubt present when Matilda, then Queen of England, was buried in the great marble sarcophagus, which originally stood

in the crypt below the choir. A ghostly place it is this crypt, so little changed that the centuries which have elapsed since its foundation seem a dream. And the church above, how can I describe it? It is one of the most perfect Norman buildings in existence. Even as we approach the western entrance, we are struck by the magnificence of the huge square towers with their stories of sculptured arches, and the doorway, immense, as though to welcome all the world. And then entering, we see the matchless nave. The columns supporting the round, decorated arches are tall and elegant, with sculptured capitals, and, surmounting the blind triforium, is an exquisite clerestory, with high, stilted arches soaring up into the stone roof.

But it is when we reach the choir and the transepts that we begin to wonder whether the whole building could have been designed by the stern Monk of Bec, or, if so, whether he may not have had unlawful dealings with the fairies and elves who haunted the woods around his forest home! In any case, I think that Matilda must have had a good deal to do with it; for just as Saint Stephen's, with all its majesty, is suggestive of the rude strength of the warlike William, so is this exquisite building full of feminine charm and delicacy. One seems to see in every detail and at every turn the influence of the woman artist, such as we know Matilda to have been. And, moreover, there it stands to-day almost as it must have appeared on that 18th of

June 1067, when it was consecrated in the presence of its foundress and her husband, then just returned in triumph from his conquest of England.

We may easily imagine the great building crowded with stately shaven Norman lords, and ladies in their rich costumes, and fair, long-haired Saxon nobles, brought over in William's train to swell his triumph. The silks and velvets and embroideries light up the grey walls like beds of brilliant flowers. Prominent among all towers the huge form of William, holding by the hand his little daughter Cecilia, who at the moment of the offertory is to be presented to God as a thank-offering for her father's conquest of England, and that she may grow to womanhood in the seclusion of the cloister, and pray for her family and her country. There, too, stands the child's mother Matilda, nominally the first abbess of this convent, and around are grouped the children, Robert, William, and Henry. And the light falls down upon them from the high windows, showing up the long, pleated tunics, and the colours of the embroideries, and the mantles and jewels glowing and gleaming. Then lights begin to sparkle on the altar, and music rises up to linger and die in the distant vaulting of the roof.

In the month of November, sixteen years later, we find Matilda's church once more the scene of a great ceremony, when the west doors are opened to receive the body of the Queen. There were many poor present, we are told, by whom this gentle lady

had been much beloved on account of her boundless charity. And after a Requiem Mass had been chanted, and the absolution given, they laid the body in a stone coffin in the dusky crypt below the choir of the church. We are told that to-day her bones are preserved in the black stone sarcophagus which now stands in the middle of the Nuns' Choir, behind the high altar of the church. On it you may read an inscription, telling "how she loved piety, and consoled the poor," who, indeed, sadly needed consolation in those cruel days of disorder.

As for William, after Matilda's death, he seems to have become more stern and forbidding than ever. He had always been passionate, proud, revengeful, and the well-known story of the way in which he met his death at Mantes shows that he did not soften with age. So when, having finished his days at Rouen, his body was brought to the abbey church of Saint Stephen for burial, I doubt if anyone really mourned for him as they had mourned for his wife Matilda. Wace has told us, indeed, that "there was no bishop, abbot, earl, or noble prince who did not repair to the interment of the body." He also describes how, "after they had sung the 'Libera me,' they carried William to the church"; and goes on to relate that, as the procession reached the great west door, a cry was raised that the town was on fire, so that everyone rushed off save a few monks who remained to guard the body. Even when, the fire having been extinguished, the company

returned, and the ceremony proceeded, it was again interrupted, in a most strange and embarrassing manner, by a certain young man named Acelin laying claim to the ground in which the grave had been prepared.

As we stood looking down at the marble slab which once covered all that was mortal of our first Norman King, we thought what a strange irony of fate it was that this great conqueror of England, this man who had perfected the feudal system under which all land was held from the Crown, was unable to take undisputed possession of seven feet of ground in which to lay his body! Around and above us was the great church which he had built, and echoing along the aisles and galleries I fancied I could hear the cry: "Lords, hearken unto me! I warn all, and forbid ye, by Jesu the Almighty, and by the Apostle of Rome, that ye inter not William in the spot where ye are about to lay him." And he goes on to explain that the greater part of the church belongs to him, Acelin, having been erected on his land without his permission. "I therefore appeal to William to do me right," he concludes, "in that judgment where all go alike before Him who lieth not. Before ye all I summon that he render me justice for it!"

It must have been a truly awful scene, especially in those days of superstition. The prayers and chanting ceased, the bearers halted and set down the bier upon which the dead King lay uncoffined; and a great clamour arose. After some haggling,

however, a price was agreed upon for the land, and the burial proceeded. But even then William could not rest in peace, for the grave had been made too small for his huge form, which had to be forced into it, giving rise to a very painful and horrible scene. . . .

At last it was over, and the once restless body was left to its long sleep. But his tomb was once more disturbed. In the sixteenth century, as Ducarel relates, the Bishop of Bayeux, having a great desire to see the body of William, caused the stone to be raised, and found beneath, the skeleton of an enormous man, a giant such as the chroniclers all describe him to have been, for, like King Saul, he was taller from the shoulders upward than any of his subjects.

Again, in 1562, Calvinists visited Caen, and fell upon the two abbeys, breaking the monuments of William and Matilda, rifling their tombs, melting the gold and silver vessels which the long dead worshippers had left for the service of God, and stealing the priceless vestments, covered with plaques of beaten gold, and other jewelled ornaments which had been worn by the Duke and Duchess on great occasions, all of which they had vowed to these churches they had built. And when there was no more to take they moved on to other towns, and Caen was left to sleep again till in 1793 it was torn asunder by the fury of the Great Revolution.

We can see the mob in their red caps pouring up

the great nave of Saint Stephen's, wrecking as they go the altars and statuary, forcing their way into the sacristy, and breaking open the chests and cupboards where the sacred vessels are stored. Then, reaching the choir where the Conqueror still lies, and forcing up the slab, they fall upon the ancient bones and scatter them, so that they are lost for ever among the ruin. But to-day in the choir we find once more a great stone, and on it read the inscription:

Hic sepultus est invictissimus  
Gulielmus Conquestor  
Normanniæ Dux  
Et Angliæ rex  
Hujusce Domus  
Conditor  
Qui obit Anno  
MLXXXVII.

Among the wonderful old buildings of Caen, and truly their name is legion, is that now called the Lycée Malherbe, which stands on the very site of Lanfranc's celebrated Abbaye aux Hommes. Unhappily it was rebuilt in the first half of the eighteenth century, and little remains of the original monastery. But the refectory, with its stone roof, and walls still covered with sixteenth-century panelling, is very fine and interesting. And so are the great staircase and the chapel with its beautiful woodwork, and other treasures which escaped the revolutionary fury.

And we may visit the turreted and sculptured

Hôtel de la Monnaie, and the Hôtel de la Bourse, once the Hôtel d'Escoville, which I should like to have photographed had not the court around which it is built been haunted by so many unpleasant odours! Indeed, I am afraid I must confess that the older streets of Caen are not so fragrant as they might be, which is a pity, as they are some of the quaintest and most picturesque in France. And then there is the surrounding country from which to view it all. And particularly there is the walk to the Abbey of Ardenne, which lies out upon the breezy plateau overlooking Caen. We reach it by way of La Maladrerie, an outskirt of the city, but formerly a little village where in 1161 Henry the Second of England built a leper hospital, so giving rise to the name of the district. A short climb takes us up from the squalid, low-lying street, with its noisy trams, to a breezy region of cornfields and poppies; and even a lark, rare sight in France, which, having escaped from the indefatigable Norman fowler, is soaring up into the clear air, scattering his notes in careless ecstasy. And what a view he must have! Even from the ground we look down over the country below, spread out like a vast blue picture. There is Saint Peter's, with its wonderful spire, the tall lancet windows of which are said to be unique in strength and lightness, and Saint Saviour's, Saint John's, and the rest of the churches, as well as the two great abbeys. There run the two long streets, with their crowds, their smells, their screaming trams, and here are we in the breeze and the

sunshine, out once more in the sweet, fresh country. No wonder the lark is singing so madly! No wonder the old White Canons of Saint Norbert built their abbey here rather than down beside the river! We see the group of buildings across the fields, lying half hidden behind great surrounding walls, and presently, when we have followed the footpath for awhile, come to a mighty gateway and enter the courtyard. But what a strange sight greets us! On our left still stands the huge and magnificent church, proud and splendid even in its humiliation and decay. For its doors are tottering and open, and within, nave, side chapels, even the sanctuary, are piled roof-high with hay and straw, among which a blue wagon and a farmer's cart have been thrust. Peeping here and there, forlornly, are exquisitely sculptured capitals and detached early English shafts and pillars. And around the yard are what were no doubt guest-chambers and the dwellings of monks, and other conventual buildings, but now used as stables, cowsheds, chicken-lofts. From outside, the high wall conceals the litter, the ruin; it looks as if it might still be what it was of old, a stately home of prayer and charity. But within the gates it is an understaffed farmyard, a place of dogs and cows, of fowls scratching among piles of straw, and ducks turning somersaults in the great paved fish-pond. And in what was once the house of the stately Abbot live the farmer and his family, while the beautiful Gothic chapel is a storehouse for grain and hay.



A FARM YARD IN OLD NORMANDY



A TYPICAL CHATEAU OF NORMANDY



But it is time to return to Caen, for there we shall find awaiting us another celebrated inhabitant of whom we must speak before we leave the city. To reach her we must travel through seven centuries, from the days of William and his Queen Matilda, to find ourselves in the midst of that terrific upheaval which destroyed the French monarchy and all that it signified of law and order. At that time there was living at Caen a young girl named Marie Anne Charlotte de Corday, a granddaughter or grand-niece of the great writer Peter Corneille, whose house we may visit in one of the narrow old streets of Rouen. The family of Charlotte, though noble, had become very poor; and when the mother died, Monsieur de Corday brought his children to Caen to a little house near the church of the Holy Trinity. The Abbess, sorry for them, took the two girls to be educated with her own niece in the convent of Queen Matilda, and here Charlotte grew to womanhood, a tall, beautiful, silent, rather obstinate girl, very religious, and full of utopian notions about the rights of men, which she had picked up from books lent her by the nephew of Madame de Belzunce, the Abbess. Some writers have weaved quite a romance around this young viscount, Henri de Belzunce, and Charlotte. He was a dark, pale, young man, a major in the 2nd Bourbon Infantry Regiment, and Charlotte used often to meet him when he came to visit his aunt at the abbey. But it is doubtful whether there was any romantic element in the friendship. The

young man was a royalist, and we are told that they used to have great and heated discussions, and that he would lend her books. They were of the same age—twenty; and when Henri was shot by the savage patronal guard in one of the risings at Caen, Charlotte is said to have been a witness of the horrible scene which followed, when his bleeding head was carried on a pike through the town, and his heart torn out and roasted. And, though she felt no hatred against the ignorant, misguided people, she swore to avenge him. It was on their leaders that she wished her vengeance to fall; but how accomplish her purpose, she, a young country girl, brought up in a convent without any knowledge of Paris, the centre of the mischief?

On leaving the abbey Charlotte had gone to stay with an old cousin, a Madame de Bretville, who lived in the Rue Saint Jean, inhabiting a dull, old house which formerly stood on the site now occupied by No. 148. The girl had invited herself; and the old lady, who was very miserly, was by no means pleased to have her. It was a building in two stories, separated from the road by a small, paved court, itself entered by a narrow, arched doorway, and the two ladies lived on the first floor, approached by a spiral stairway. It was a terribly depressing life for a beautiful young girl, and no doubt she often used to cross the road to the old church of Saint Jean, which still stands opposite the site of the house.

We went there ourselves the other day, and, as

we walked up the tottering nave and came out under the superb lantern which crowns the intersection, we pictured her tall, slender form kneeling before the altar rail, and, as we paused, three old bells chimed, and a fourth struck the hour, the same bells which had often warned Charlotte that her hour of freedom was over and she must return to her prison.

The church itself had been described to us as flamboyant, and of little account compared with Saint Peter's and the other architectural gems of Caen. But it impressed me immensely with its very age. It had evidently once been a great and much frequented house of prayer; now it was empty, standing as it does in one of the poorer streets of the city. Its foundations must be none too secure, for the walls and roof are disfigured here and there by great cracks, and there is an air of age and melancholy about the whole building. But the colours! It is true that most of the windows have been filled in with plain glass, but enough of the old paintings remain to stain the walls, so that the sculptured stone of the ribbed roof, and the gallery round the triforium, resemble the most exquisitely tinted Chinese ivory. The south transept has a superb altar to the Sacred Heart, and above it a painted window representing the Last Supper and the Crucifixion—a wonderful mingling of red, green, and blue. But how pathetic it all is! We had been thinking of a revival of religion in France, and surely this building might be taken to

typify the condition of the Faith in that country—the one beautiful thing in the squalid district where it stands, bound together, propped from falling by the love and devotion of the poor worshippers who gather beneath its roof. How long will it continue to exist? Did Charlotte think of all this as she sat for long hours looking up at the picture of the world's great sacrifice? Did it strengthen her to strike her one great blow which she thought would save her country from utter infidelity?

We met the priest afterwards coming out of his house in the Rue des Carmes, and he told us of the rebuilding of the church in 1417, after its destruction, when our Henry V had let his army loose to pillage the city of Caen.

He pointed out the house, now No. 44, next, I think, to his own, where several of the leading Girondins used to meet after they had been driven out of Paris in the spring of 1793. There it was that they plotted in secret the downfall of the Mountain, the name given to the party on the extreme left of the revolutionary assembly, of which Marat was the leader. There seems little doubt that Charlotte was largely influenced by what she heard from these men, and particularly from Charles Jean Marie Barbaroux, their leader. She had probably noticed them going and coming in the street, or had met them even in the church itself. She had heard how Barbaroux had posted up the celebrated Grey Placard, which I believe

still exists in the British Museum, and which was specially directed against Marat.

We hear of a visit paid to this Barbaroux one June evening by Charlotte, accompanied by an old servant; and of other visits, when she told the chief of the bitter feeling which existed among many of the inhabitants of Caen against the doings of the Mountain. But in everything that she did there seems to have been a quiet, orderly determination, which shows that she was moved by no sudden impulse. Moreover, she had neither expectation nor possibly even a wish to escape the inevitable result of what she purposed doing. Before leaving Caen she burned all incriminating papers, went to bid farewell to a friend at Vernon, saying that she was going on a journey and did not like to leave without embracing her. Wrote to her father, explaining that she was leaving for England without his permission, and could not say good-bye, as it would make her too sad.

It was on the 9th of July 1793 that she set out for Paris, putting up at the Hôtel de la Providence, in the Rue des Vieux Augustins, of which inn she had been told by one of the employés at the coach-office at Caen. Several stories are told of her short stay there. How, while her room was being prepared, she asked questions of the servant concerning Le Petit Marat, and laughed when she was told that he was a good citizen. How, on the morning of the 13th, she went out early, as soon as the shops were opened, and bought, in the Palais Royal, for

forty sous, one of those strong, pointed, kitchen knives we still find used in France. How, having ordered a carriage, and eaten her breakfast, she set out for Marat's house in the Rue des Cordeliers No. 30, and asked quite simply to see him. The portress answered that the Friend of the People was very ill, and could see no one, and Charlotte had to return to her room. Here she wrote a letter, saying that she had just arrived from Caen, the centre of the Girondin disturbance, and could put it in Marat's power to do France a great service. This note she sent by post; and in the evening, dressed more gaily than usual in grey, with a pink fichu, wearing a black hat with a green ribbon and cockade, and carrying a fan, she made her way once more to Marat's house. This time the door was opened by the woman Simone Evrard, and Charlotte was admitted. We have all pictured the little dwarfish Marat, sitting in his bath, and heard his voice, as Charlotte heard it, bidding her to enter.

A plank had been laid across the bath, and he was writing, and there were the remains of supper about, and all the while Simone kept going and coming. For a time they talked of the troubles at Caen, and Charlotte spoke of her friends at the Rue des Carmes. And when, having watched him take down their names, she had seen him mark each for the guillotine, and among them her chief friend Barbaroux, the girl rose, and, grasping her knife, struck him from above, killing him with a single blow.

From her prison Charlotte wrote a full account of all that had happened, to be sent to her friends in the Rue des Carmes. The letter is preserved among the national archives. Then came the trial, the letter to her father, and the evening of the 30th of July, when she set out in the cart on her two hours' jolting ride through the streets of Paris to the Place of the Guillotine. They say that Samson, in his pity for her, placed himself between her and the knife as she was waiting; and that, noticing his intention, she motioned him aside, saying with a smile: "I have a right to be curious about it, for I have never seen a guillotine."

They buried her in the cemetery of the Madeline. In the Museum of Versailles you may see her portrait, painted from life by David, as she sat in her prison waiting for death. But, if you are of my way of thinking, you will find Charlotte Corday nearest to you at Caen, at the Hospice, then the Abbaye aux Dames, where the stately Abbess, Madame de Belzunce, once ruled, and in whose park and spacious cloister Charlotte read and dreamed; in the Rue Saint Jean, against whose more ancient houses her skirts have brushed in passing; up by the castle, where she came face to face with the ghastly head of her friend set on its dripping pike; in the Rue des Carmes, where the Girondin deputies were lodged. But more than all I think we shall find Charlotte in the tottering old church of Saint Jean, kneeling before the altar of the Sacred Heart, gazing up at the crucified form

of Him who gave her the strength needed to consummate her own sacrifice. For there can be no doubt that it was from this point of view that Charlotte Corday regarded her deed: "I killed one man to save a hundred thousand!" she cried at her trial. "A savage, wild beast to give rest to my country!" And so, in quitting this ancient city, let our last thought be of this young and beautiful girl who, as truly as any of the heroes of old, gave her life for the future of her native land.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FALAISE

It is a grey day, but grey weather suits an ancient land like Normandy, haunt of phantoms, legends, and memories! All the interest of the province lies in the past, with the story of the great ones who have gone. We go to Normandy to find them again inhabiting the ruined castles where they once lived and loved, to read about them in the libraries, to catch sight of them kneeling in the churches where so many of them worshipped, to visit those of their tombs which the vandalism of the Revolution has spared. Travellers from all lands flock into Normandy, and incidentally they leave behind plenty of good money, which helps to swell materially the prosperity of this rich province of France.

But it is especially the English tourist one meets in Normandy, for our country lies so close to its shores. An Englishman can easily spend his week-ends in one of the old towns over the Channel, and scarcely interfere with his business in London at all. And what history his children can absorb from a visit to Caen, Bayeux, Falaise, and the rest of the

picturesque old places! For are they not all connected with our early Norman kings? The filibustering William becomes a personage far more real than one's own great-grandfather; even his father Robert the Devil, and the older dukes, his ancestors, emerge from the shadowy pages of our lesson-books real flesh and blood as we are, to walk the quaint old streets again, telling us stories of the days when they were young. We may pity, or despise, or admire them, according to our fancy or our bringing up; but whatever we may feel in England about the conquest of our country will not detract from our opinion of William when once we have met him and grown to know him in his native land. I am sure that if I had lived in the eleventh century, which God forbid, I should have hated and resented this proud, overbearing, cruel conqueror of England. But, making his acquaintance in the Normandy of to-day, one cannot but recognise that the greatness and prosperity of England began with the coming of William the Bastard, and feel that the result of the battle of Hastings was not so much the conquest of England as her new birth. For, take it how you will, our island at that time had sunk into a very decrepit state, and, so far as civilisation was concerned, England was behind the rest of Europe. It needed drastic measures to bring the country up to date, and the Normans were a stern people. So the story which has come down to us of the reforming of the "evil customs of the benighted Islanders," as

Freeman designates our ancestors, is certainly very grim and terrible. But, as the same writer goes on to point out, William was a man of conservative instincts, and had no wish to change England into a second Normandy. So, having conquered our land, he "allowed our national life and our national institutions to live on unbroken," and the final form which the fusion of the two peoples took was "for the conquerors to be lost in the greater mass of the conquered."

When I first thought of writing this little book about my visit to Normandy, I was attracted by the beauty of the country, its rich meadows, its apple orchards, its forgotten shrines, forests, and homely villages. But after a week or two of this pastoral life, fate, or could it have been the spirit of the great William himself, began leading me to the old towns, Rouen, Caen, Evreux, Lisieux, and everywhere we found the Duke. Out of the grey autumnal mists he would come riding on his huge charger, so real, so living, that the present would vanish, and we would find ourselves back in the eleventh century, following the story of this great man through all the varied scenes in which it was enacted. And it was thus that we made our way to Falaise, his birthplace.

We had set off from Caen in the early morning, while the country was still damp and blanketed in mist, like England. On the horizon, marching across the level wastes of field and meadowland, colourless and monotonous in the sunless atmo-

sphere of an early October morning, marched endless ranks of lopped and shaven trees, recalling memories of the wretched peasants whom the great Duke tore from their homes and forced to follow him to England. On a morning like this their ghosts rise from the furrows, hide in the ditches. The very hayricks take on the forms of their forsaken homesteads.

Presently we halt at a station called Mézidon, a junction for all kinds of places, and change into a little, pottering local train to wait and wait and wait. But the morning mist is thinning a little, and the shabby goods-trains loom out on the sidings, reminding one that it is the twentieth century, and, William having been dead eight hundred years, we are free to go and come as we please.

Then, once again, we find ourselves out in the broad, flat country, passing a group of disused army huts which add a touch of realism to our dreaming, bringing to mind another war, when a modern piratical chieftain, of the same name as the long-dead Conqueror, forced on a conflict which brought trouble and sorrow to the whole civilised world.

At Cœulibœuf the hedges and orchards begin. It might be England, save for the long ranks of poplars. And still the country is vague with mist, like Arthur's land, full of dreams and visions. The sight of the church spire reminds us of Charlotte Corday, whose uncle was dean of this little place. It was he who alluded to his niece as "a new

Judith raised up by God for the salvation of France.”

The battle of the sun and the fog was over by the time we arrived at Falaise, and, being market-day, we found the town crowded. Having descended the long road from the station we emerged into the old irregular market-place, and paused involuntarily at sight of the extraordinarily picturesque and ancient church of Saint Gervais, which dates from the eleventh century. Its great square Norman tower is crowned by a steep roof of slate, in which are built curious little pointed gabled windows like pigeon-houses, which attract our notice at once, as do the flying buttresses of the choir between which nestle ancient chapels.

The market was very crowded and noisy, so, passing beneath the beautiful porch, we took refuge in the vast, silent, empty building, and after awhile walked about, looking at the incised funeral slabs which pave the chapels and line the walls. On many of them a human form has been cut, with a face of white marble let into the grey stone and white hands raised in prayer.

Presently, growing hungry, we went out to search for an inn, and for some time wandered through the narrow old streets unable to discover one. Then, just as we were becoming rather desperate, a woman darted out of a doorway, and, inquiring if we were looking for a restaurant, led us into a copper-hung kitchen, which opened straight off the road, where was a great fire, and a stout, red-faced

cook, and a rich appetising smell, which made us more hungry than ever. Our guide took us through to a room behind, where we found tables set, and a girl, so pretty and attractive in her fresh-coloured, sturdy, Norman way, that we at once named her Arletta. The first dish turned out to be calves' head, and she was greatly troubled because I did not take it. I never can, after seeing the calves on market-day. "For herself she ate everything," she informed us, and certainly she looked as though she did, as no doubt did the Arletta of the eleventh century, whom we had come to visit, and who might well have lived in just such a room, ancient, low-ceiled, with small-paned windows, through which the sunlight passed timidly as though doubtful what it might discover. We sat at thick-legged oak tables, black with age, and drank good Norman cider, and presently, having paid our bill and ventured to tip Arletta, who took it very graciously, began making our way up to the castle.

On our road we passed through a great silent square, Place Guillaume as it is called, where stands the church of the Holy Trinity, wonderful and richly decorated, and on the opposite side the Hôtel de Ville.

But after all we have come to visit the castle, which stands on the great rock or Falaise which has given its name to the town, and where we find Ogier the Dane, one of Rollo's chiefs, established as early as the ninth century. From his eyrie he could look out over his broad lands and swoop

down to slay and pillage whenever he had a mind. Early in the eleventh century we hear of Duke Richard the Second giving over the government of the town and surrounding country to one Onfroisle-Danois, who built the first great fortress called Porte-le-Comte. At Duke Richard's death the estate of Falaise passed to his second son Robert, afterwards known as Robert the Magnificent, or, as he has been called by some, Robert the Devil. And thus we arrive at the great story of Falaise, that which always returns to our minds as we look up at the towering donjon on the rock, the tradition which still, after nearly a thousand years, brings visitors to this old Norman town, the romantic history of the young Count Robert, and the fair daughter of the Tanner of Falaise.

The custodian, who lives in a little house at the entrance to the castle grounds, was giving her husband his dinner, so we went back to photograph the splendid equestrian statue of the great William, which stands in the centre of the square. Nothing could be finer, nothing more suggestive than this bronze effigy of Normandy's mighty hero. He sits his rearing horse as though he and the great magnificent beast were one, gripping the bridle with his left hand, and flourishing his pennon-crowned spear in his right. He looks the very incarnation of a wild Northern chief. Around the pedestal stand the earlier Dukes, his ancestors; Robert, his father; Richard, his uncle; Richard the Good, his grandfather; Richard the Fearless; William Long-

spear; and the great founder of the race, Rollo. There they stand, these implacable heroes, and above, dwarfing all by his size, his might, and the story of his achievements, is this tanner's grandson William the Conqueror of England. As we look at him we can almost understand the story of his rough wooing of Matilda. What woman could resist such a man? And we can even better understand the influence he exercised over the weak though pious Edward the Confessor, and his domination of Harold and the other Saxon lords. He was surely a reincarnation of Rollo, his ancestor, a conqueror of new worlds.

On our return to the castle gateway we found our guide waiting; and as we passed beneath the entrance, and followed the long, grass-grown terrace shadowed by splendid lime-trees, she pointed out to us the remains of ancient towers and bastions, for this terrace represents the southern outer wall of the castle. At the western end we found other defences, especially a semicircular tower called Tour-à-la-Reine. Our guide was a great talker and well primed in the story of the castle, and as we walked slowly along she described to us the wild life led here in the days of Robert and his companions. Dissatisfied with his father's provision, and jealous of his elder brother Duke Richard, he hastened, as soon as the old Duke was dead, to take possession of Falaise, and established himself in the fortress on the rock. It was enthralling to listen to the story as we approached the very castle where



THE CASTLE OF FALAISE



STATUE OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR AT FALAISE

it all occurred; to imagine Duke Richard's arrival with his soldiers; to listen to the noise, the shouting; to see the rebel younger brother Robert led prisoner before the Duke, who pardons him and sets him free; to see this same generous Duke dying, with many of his nobles, poisoned, as it is supposed, by Robert's order, and buried in the old abbey church at Fécamp, where his father had been interred.

If half the stories told of this Robert are true, he must have been a terror to the neighbourhood. But it is more than probable that the wild doings of an earlier Robert have been laid to his charge. And now the great donjon begins to overshadow us, and we walk timidly as though the early chiefs were looking down upon us from above and ordering the sentinels to be hanged for allowing us to pass the outer fortifications!

I should think no one could stand before the great building unmoved. The first fortress on this rock is said by some writers to have been built by Julius Cæsar. The castle has been thus described in an old manuscript discovered at Falaise:

“The castle stands at the extremity of the town, and is shaped like the stern of a ship, surrounded by rocks, pools, and walls flanked with towers, and separated from the town by a deep ditch. Within the fortifications, which are capable of holding two thousand men, is a little chapel dedicated to Saint Proux. The keep is a huge square building, very ancient, and joined to and beside it is a smaller

building, also very old, in which the Dukes of Normandy, and in particular Robert, the father of William the Conqueror, had their dwelling."

This great donjon keep, the very heart of the castle, is in such perfect condition without, that, upon entering by the one low narrow doorway, we are startled at finding the interior a mere empty shell. But, climbing up among the ruins with which it is encumbered, we reach presently a certain window, set high at an angle of the wall, and from thence look down over the valley of the Ante. "Look!" I exclaimed, pointing, "there is still a tannery down there at foot of the castle hill!" "But, certainly," replied the woman, "there has never been a Falaise without a tannery. It is even more correct to say that Falaise took its origin from its tanneries."

She went on to tell me the legend of the shepherd of Guibray, a little village, now a suburb of Falaise. It happened at a time when all this region was forest land, and the great rock upon which the castle now stands was uninhabited, and a certain shepherd used to feed his flock in a clearing where to-day stands the church of Guibray. One day, noticing the sheep scratching in the grass, he began digging at the spot, and found a statue of a woman and child, which he took to be that of Our Lady. A little oratory was quickly raised to shelter the image, and pilgrims soon began to arrive, especially on the 15th of August, the day on which, in the year 720, being the Feast of the Assumption, the

statue was discovered. Soon miracles were reported; the pilgrimage grew in importance; hawkers, who always follow in the wake of religious festivals, began to throng the roads leading to Guibray; and, finally, an annual fair came to be held in the avenues and lanes leading to the church, a very flourishing and important fair, since William the Conqueror had exempted this his birthplace from all taxes. And on the banks of the swift, little river Ante, which we find still watering the valley, shoemakers and leatherworkers of all kinds established themselves, so that, by the middle of the eighteenth century, there were no less than fifty-five tanneries in the new town, which had come into being at foot of the great rock.

The tannery of Arletta's father is now owned by one Jules le Couturier, and has been in his family for at least two hundred years—earlier than that, who knows? Before me, as I write, lies a copy of the old poem, by Benoit de Sainte-More, giving an account of the young Duke Robert's first sight of the tanner's daughter. Robert, who is said to have been only seventeen at the time, had just returned from a day's hunting, and had no doubt paused, on the way to his room, to look down from this very window at which all visitors to Falaise take up their stand, while the guide recounts the well-known love-story.

At the fountain below, to-day marked by an inscription, a group of girls were washing linen, their skirts turned up to their knees; and one, "whose

skin was whiter than snow, or the flower of the lily, her cheeks like new-born roses, and her eyes full of modesty and kindness," in short, Arletta, the daughter of the tanner Verpré, so captivated the heart of the young Duke, that he sent his chamberlain to ask her of her father. The story of the courtship is very vivid as we stand looking down upon Arletta's old home.

There was some natural hesitation on the part of the father to this "marriage after the Danish fashion," according to which several of the Norman dukes had wedded; and on being pressed still further he went for advice to his hermit brother, who lived in the neighbouring forest. This worthy took rather a different view of the matter, pointing out that it was undoubtedly the duty of a subject to obey in all things the pleasure of his lord. And so Arletta went up to the castle in her beautiful new clothes, of which an old writer has given a description—the white undergarment, the close-fitting grey pelisse, the loose, short mantle, and over all her long, fair hair. It must have been by this very window that she passed, for here, close by, is her chamber, with the alcove in which the bed was set, and even the little niche for the lamp. There is the hearth, too, before which, later, her baby son William was laid, and took his "seizin" by grasping the rushes with which the floor was strewn.

There are many stories told of the early days of the boy William. How, as he was walking in the forest near Falaise, he was stolen by Arletta's arch-

enemy, Saga the witch, who sends a wolf to fetch him, and hides him in her cave. The tale reads like one of Grimm's *Household Stories*. It is the great and holy Herluin, founder of the Abbey of Bec, whom the Duke sends in search of the missing child, and with him a certain Allen Bourdon and the boy's dog Bruno. The story tells how the faithful beast led them straight through the forest to the witch's cave, which they found closed by a heavy door, and guarded by a dwarf of terrifying aspect. Having forced an entrance, they saw to their horror that the child lay bound, while over him Saga brandished a knife ready to strike. But the dog had seen also, and, bounding over the head of the dwarf, rushed up to the witch, and pinned her down, while the men made off into the forest with William. The legend goes on to say that it was as a thank-offering for the preservation of his son that Duke Robert not only created Herluin a count and Bourdon a knight, but vowed to go himself on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The same story tells how on the ship was Saga disguised, and of the storms and other misfortunes she brought about. Finally, she poisons Duke Robert, and, returning to Normandy, raises a revolt of the barons against Arletta's young son William. But at the battle of Val-des-Dunes, near Caen, she is fortunately taken prisoner and burned as a witch. So much for Saga!

How much truth there may be in this wild story it is difficult to say. No doubt legends grew as fast in those days as in these! A child of William's

birth had many enemies to fear. There was Talvas, son of the Duke of Alençon, who, meeting the little boy one day walking hand in hand with his squire in the town, frowned down at the child, exclaiming, "God curse you! It is through you and your family that my race will be humbled!"

So when Duke Robert, still young, and having the roving blood of the Vikings in his veins, took it into his head to start off on this pilgrimage to the Holy Land, his barons tried to prevent him, declaring that the duchy was in too unsettled a condition to be left without a ruler. And it was then that the Duke sent for his son, and, taking him in his arms, presented him to his barons as their future lord. "I have this little son," said he, "who will soon grow, if it please God. Of his wisdom and courage I have every confidence. I beg you to accept him from this moment as my successor. I appoint Allan, Duke of Brittany, to be Governor and Seneschal of Normandy, until William is of age; but Henry, King of France, shall have the guardianship of the boy."

So, before setting out on the journey from which he never returned, we see Robert taking the little William to Paris to place him under the care of his overlord, and for a time Falaise sees the child no more.

Seven long years pass before we meet William again at Falaise. His father, Duke Robert, has not returned from his journey. He lies buried at Nicea, or, as William of Malmesbury has it, at Apulia. Arletta

has married a knight named Herlewin de Conteville; and William, a handsome boy of fourteen, is living at Rouen, the capital of his duchy, in the old castle down by the river. Henry, King of France, has not proved a very faithful guardian, and is making use of the jealous and disaffected Norman barons, of whom there are many, to take possession one by one of the strongest places in Normandy. He has already dispossessed William of the great frontier castle of Tillières, and now has encouraged a count named Toustain le Gois to establish himself in the strong castle and town of Falaise.

It is the year 1040, and William is already a commander, for, ever since he was able to play at soldiers, he has had his company of boys, and been taught the art of war. So, as soon as the news reaches him of this fresh treachery, he starts off from Rouen with the Constable de Gacé and the best of his troops for Falaise. We can imagine the effect upon the people as they beheld this handsome boy in his shining armour: he their townsman, the only son of their Duke, the grandson of their friend the Tanner du Verpré. At the first opportunity, it being a very dark night, the gates of the town were opened to receive William; and when Toustain saw a great piece of the castle wall fall under the battering rams of the Duke, he surrendered, and departed into the exile to which William condemned him.

But the young Duke's troubles were not yet over,

for there were traitors even among his relations. There was his cousin Guy of Burgundy, who had been brought up with him "ever since William had begun to ride, and to know how to feed and dress himself," and on whom William had lavished all his boyish affection. Within the very castles of which the young Duke had made him governor, he plotted and planned secretly with Hamon-es-Dens and Grimold-es-Pessiez, and other jealous malcontents and creatures of the King of France, saying that he himself, being born in lawful wedlock, had a better right to the duchy than this grandson of a tanner, and promising all kinds of rewards to his supporters. So they began to prepare for an attack on the Duke.

William was staying at Valognes at the time, for the sake of the hunting; the thick woods around abounding in game of all kinds. One night, just as he had fallen asleep, there commenced a tremendous noise and battering upon the castle door, and he heard the voice of a favourite fool of his, one Gallet of Bayeux, crying, "Rise up! Rise up! or ye be all dead men! William, where art thou? Thy foes are gathering thick around; if they find thee thou art a dead man." It is Master Wace who tells the graphic story. The young Duke arose, "sorely dismayed," and, waiting only to fling a cloak round his shoulders, mounted his horse and fled away on the road to Falaise. Once, after passing the fords at Vire, he paused, to enter the church of Saint Clement, and, falling on his knees,

prayed God to be his safe conduct and to let him pass in safety. It must have been a wild and terrible ride for the boy, for he was alone and dared speak to no one, even to inquire the way, fearing to encounter enemies at every turn. But as he rode through Rue, just before sunrise, he beheld the knight Hubert-de-Rue standing at his gate. Now, William's horse was all but spent, and he himself still clothed only in his shirt and breeches, so it is no wonder that the good knight, recognising him, cried out, astonished at his condition.

Then said William, "Dare I speak to thee, Hubert?" And, when Hubert had reassured him, he told him all the matter.

The knight led him into his house, and gave him his own good horse, and, calling three of his five sons, bade them conduct the Duke safely to Falaise, and lodge him in the castle, well knowing that there he would be safe.

After they were out of sight, Hubert remained standing upon the bridge looking out over the way by which William had arrived, and listening anxiously; and it was not long before the traitors came spurring into sight, and stopped to inquire if he had seen "The Bastard." "Aye," answered Hubert, "he passed this way not long ago. You will have him soon, for he cannot have gone far. But stay, I will lead you myself. I should like to give him the first blow!" The old chronicler does not tell us by what route he led them, but we can

be sure that it was long enough to give the Duke plenty of time to reach Falaise!

As we stand in this mighty castle we recall many scenes other than those connected with the Conqueror. In 1139 we shall find Geoffrey Plantagenet besieging the fortress, but unable to take it by force, though later it was surrendered to him by the inhabitants themselves.

In 1203 it was again besieged and surrendered to the King of France, Philippe Augustus. And there was a great and terrible siege of Falaise by Henry V of England, when the castle had to capitulate for want of food, and remained in the hands of the English until, in 1450, it was recaptured by the French under the great Dunois.

It seemed strange, after spending hours in the company of these long dead heroes, to find oneself in the railway station waiting for a train to take us back to Caen. The platform was crowded with people returning from market, and we had some difficulty in finding seats. At Mézidon we had to change, and for some time it really seemed as though we were fated to pass the night on that comfortless platform. However, everyone except ourselves seemed resigned, certainly no one appeared surprised. No doubt they were accustomed to the vagaries of the local Norman trains! At intervals tin trumpets would hoot and whistles shriek, but, so far as I could see, all in vain. And even when at last our train did really emerge out of the gathering dusk, and we seemed on the point of starting, the

stationmaster, a gorgeous person in a white cap and much gold lace, espied a girl in our compartment, and another delay ensued, till a second train arriving from which several passengers descended to squeeze into our already overcrowded carriages; then, indeed, with much urging from the impatient whistle and tin trumpet the train began to move.

It would have been an unbearably tedious journey save for a very pretty girl who sat opposite with her mother. The latter was not bad-looking in her fresh-coloured Norman way, but the daughter was charming. Her brown hair was arranged in two plaits and coiled over her ears; and she had the prettiest of blue eyes that had a way of smiling from under their long black lashes at nothing in particular, except, perhaps, her own girlish thoughts. She was charmingly dressed, too, in a flowered cotton gown, very simply made, and long enough for her to have been considered hopelessly dowdy by more fashionable town girls. Her neck was all the more provoking, because the simple white muslin collar she wore fitted so closely under her rounded chin; and over all she wore a grey cloth coat with some sort of decoration, a white Greek cross with a dark-blue edge, and in the centre a circle with another cross on a gold ground. I feel sure she was just the girl I should have liked my son to marry, if I had had a son. From her neat little brown shoes to her neat little black hat, she was such a picture of a girl as one seldom meets with

in these days. And my mind being still full of Falaise and Arletta, I thought how fortunate she was to have been born in this our twentieth century, instead of in the time of Duke Robert the Magnificent and the Tanner's daughter.

## CHAPTER IX

### BAYEUX

WE had taken advantage of a fine morning to visit Bayeux. We reached it early, and, as we left the station and began walking down the long Avenue Sadi-Carnot, the October mists still hung heavily over the meadows, pale yellow mists. As the sun grew stronger, they warmed and deepened to a golden haze, seen through which the town we were approaching resembled some

“City of shadowy palaces  
And stately, rich in emblem, and the work  
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone . . .”

—such wizardry is there in a fine October morning. Already twice we had crossed the little river Aure, when the road turned gently to the right, and we saw rising up into the iridescent blue of the sky the strangely beautiful spire-crowned lantern of the cathedral. The mist had thinned somewhat, and the lower buildings were growing more sharply defined, losing their romance. But the great central tower of the church was still veiled and

dreamlike, purple seen through pale gold, as though uncertain whether it belonged to earth or heaven.

Few people would, I think, visit Bayeux to-day save for its tapestry and its cathedral. Centuries ago this Pagus Bajocassinus, as it was called, had other attractions, however. On a rising ground to the north of the city stood one of the three most celebrated of Druid temples, where the god Belenus was adored, and a golden calf, which is said to have lain buried for ages beneath the temple ruins. Here, also, was one of the great colleges of the Druids.

The Romans at their coming renamed the city Augustodurum, and gave it splendid baths, over whose site now stands the ancient church of Saint Lawrence. There were temples, too, where other and more licentious gods replaced the sterner deities of the earlier cult. Abundant traces of this Roman occupation have been found beneath the soil at Bayeux.

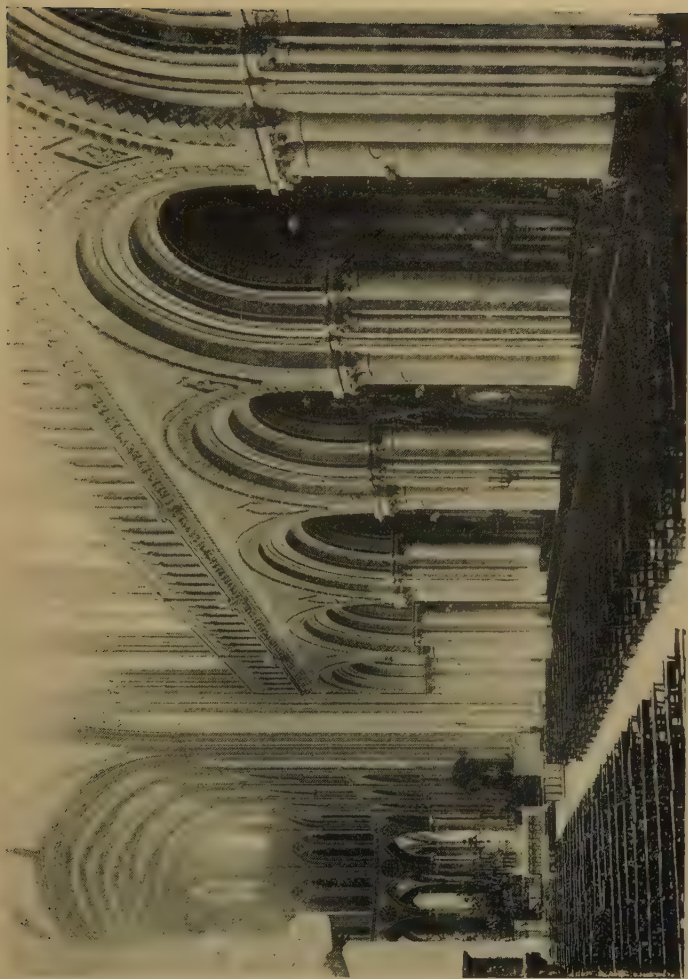
But even the Roman civilisation could not stand before the savage fury of the Men of the North, who, in the middle of the fourth century, fell upon Pagus Bajocassinus like wolves, rending and devouring all that came in their way, as was their savage custom. Being near to the sea, the country attracted them, and they settled down on the ruins of the city they had destroyed, so far as such rovers could settle anywhere. They formed a kind of independent republic, living a life of robbery by

sea and land. They spoke the old Danish tongue of their ancestors, guarding it jealously from any admixture of French or Latin, and remained devoted to the worship of their ancient gods, Thor and Wodin, long after the rest of Normandy had become Christian. Their war cry, "Thor Aide!" was raised by the soldiers of the Bessin as late as the Battle of Hastings. Norman lords sent their sons to be educated at Bayeux, that they might learn to speak in all its purity the old Norse language, just as to-day we send our children to Touraine when we wish them to speak French with a perfect accent. I suppose every traveller in Normandy has heard of the beautiful Popa, daughter of the Count of the Bessin. After the Northmen, led by Rollo, had forced their way into the city, now called Bayeux, and had burned her home and slain her father, in the division of the spoil the young girl found herself given as a slave to the Scandinavian chief, who married her after the "rites of his religion and the laws of his country," and by whom he had his son and successor William Longspear.

Strangely enough, it seems to have proved a very happy marriage. For though, when later, Rollo, then Duke of Normandy, had for political reasons found himself obliged to take to wife the daughter of the King of France, he formally repudiated the Scandinavian beauty, he did not forget her. No sooner had the French girl died (which she seems to have done rather early) than he hastened to send for Popa; and, as William of Jumièges tells us,

again went through a ceremony of marriage with her, but this time probably after the Christian rite, he being by this time, nominally at any rate, a Christian. Rollo, as we have seen, had his capital at Rouen, but, like all Normans of the period, sent his son William at an early age to be educated at Bayeux. The boy was given into the charge of Count Bothon, the governor of the Bessin, and learned not only the language of his forefathers, but their arts of war and their disregard of fatigue and discomfort. His little son Richard was living at Bayeux for the same reason when he was summoned to Rouen to preside at his father's funeral. He it was who married the beautiful young Danish girl Gunnor, whose daughter Emma became first the wife of Ethelred, King of England, and afterwards married the great Canute. We shall remember her better, perhaps, as being that Emma who had to walk over the red-hot ploughshares in Winchester cathedral. They were all just the same wild, savage Scandinavians as their forefather Rollo, founder of the race. And when we hear of William of Falaise setting out to conquer England we shall remember that he had the blood of these piratical Vikings flowing in his veins, deliberately nurtured and encouraged by his proud ancestors, who had almost all been educated in this ancient town of Bayeux, that they might retain the characteristics of their fathers.

We should like to have seen (from a safe distance) the old Bayeux of those days, protected as it was



THE NAVE OF THE CATHEDRAL OF BAYEUX



by its twelve towers, and entered by four fortified gates. But it was a restless place to inhabit, for no one's life was safe for long, and few died peacefully in their beds. It was here that the rebel lords, led by Guy of Burgundy, plotted against the young Duke William, and were overheard by the fool Gallet, who warned his young master and so saved his life, as we have told when speaking of Falaise.

But come let us visit the cathedral, and in passing to the west end be sure to notice the entrance to the south transept, which is worth coming all the way from England to see. It strikes one at once, for here is carved in stone, that all may read, the story of the murder of the great Archbishop of Canterbury, Saint Thomas à Becket. When one thinks of him to-day one is apt to forget how world-wide was his fame, and how from all parts of Europe pilgrims flocked to his shrine. Also, in those days the Christian Church was not disunited as it became later, and English bishops were recognised in France as in England. This pictured history of Henry's crime and repentance was therefore thoroughly understood by those who saw it, and no doubt served to heighten the fame of the great Saint of Canterbury. As to its architecture, it greatly resembles that of the south porch of the cathedral of Lincoln.

But let us walk round to the western end, and enter by the great door. What a sight meets our eyes! A Norman nave, perfect as, on the day,

when, in the year 1078, it was consecrated by John, Archbishop of Rouen, in the presence of William the Conqueror, his brother Odo the bishop, Queen Matilda, and all her children. A splendid sight it must have been when these walls, then new and glistening, and hung with the celebrated tapestry, looked down upon all these famous folk in their gorgeous dresses. There is the great Norman King himself, for we cannot visit a town or village in Normandy without meeting him, and beside him his Queen, their many children kneeling behind like so many figures on an ancient tomb, their hands raised in prayer, their faces full of pious devotion. They appear such a model family that it is almost impossible to believe the terrible stories we read of these insubordinate sons. Odo the bishop, too, how devout he looks! Yet he has already cast covetous eyes on the duchy, and even on the Kingdom of England, of which his brother has made himself monarch. It was but four or five years later that William arrested him with his own hand for treason, and imprisoned him in the old castle of Rouen, where so many of his relations had been incarcerated. It was only as the King lay upon his deathbed that the bishop of Bayeux was released, to work more mischief! If only there had been newspapers in those days, how exciting we should have found them. This bishop Odo, for instance. No sooner was his brother dead than he conspired with his nephew Robert to upset the late King's will, and place the wretched ne'er-do-weel

on the throne of England. In fact, most of the troubles and horrors which followed the death of William were due to this unworthy and ambitious Odo, bishop of Bayeux. But we shall meet him later, when we visit the tapestry. For the present let us walk round the cathedral, and admire the exquisite sculptured arches, no two alike, and the wonderful diaper work which covers the wall between them, and the strange little bas-reliefs filling in the angles where they meet. I suppose the original roof sprang from this level. To-day the upper portion of the nave consists of a low triforium arcade and a lofty clerestory of high, narrow windows, constructed very early in the thirteenth century. As for the choir, it is of the same period as the clerestory, and was built by an English bishop of Bayeux, Henry of Beaumont, in 1205. Below lies the burial-place of the earliest of the bishops, over which a Norman crypt has been erected—a dim, ancient, ghostly place, the roof supported by twelve squat carven pillars. And as we stand there we cannot but think how much it resembles the Norman crypt of Canterbury, though, of course, on an infinitely smaller scale.

In the year 1543 Bayeux underwent a savage and horrible outrage at the hands of the Calvinists. The story of the sufferings of the inhabitants is too terrible to relate; but these streets and ancient houses, these churches and even the cathedral itself, witnessed such scenes as horrify one to recall. It was during this awful period that the graves in

the crypt were opened, and the bodies, stripped of their wrappings, thrown to the dogs. And so for a time Mass ceased to be offered in the cathedral of Notre-Dame. But through it all the great building was itself spared, and that almost by a miracle. For the order had gone forth for its destruction, when a monk, at risk of his life, ventured to approach the commander, one Romillé, and represented to him what a splendid Protestant temple the place would make, and how little the necessary alterations would cost. Thus the actual building of the cathedral was saved, and, after the storm had passed, was re-consecrated and once more put to its former uses. But the treasury, once so rich with its silver statues, its crosses, golden candelabras, its superb chalices and jewelled mitres, all that was gone. All the rich vestments had been stolen by the soldiers, but the ancient chasuble of Saint Ragnobert was saved. The bishop Charles d'Humières, escaping barely with his life, made time to fetch this greatest of the relics, and bore it with him to England. Here it remained in safety till the storm was over. You may see it to-day once more in its place in the treasury, together with a few other curious things, such as the Dragon which carried the great candle in the procession on Easter Saturday.

In the south transept is an old painting of the murder of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. Who gave it to the church I wonder? We know that Henry the Second had a palace at Bayeux, and used often to stay there. It was at Bayeux that

he received the visit of the Pope's legates, charged with the task of reconciling the King to the Archbishop. And it was at a castle near by that the King was holding his Christmas Court, when fresh news reached him causing the well-known exclamation that sent the four knights off on their murderous journey to Canterbury. It is curious to find the story of his crime so vividly portrayed in this city where Henry was living when it was committed.

After visiting the cathedral we walked round the town, admiring the old houses in the Rue Bien Venu. They are so very quaint and unchanged that it is quite easy to fancy them once more inhabited by the wives and daughters of the former burgers of Bayeux.

We wondered where stood the hospital, built at the Pope's command, by Duke William, on the occasion of his marriage to Matilda of Flanders? The House of the Dean, too, with its little chapel dedicated to Saint Thomas, where did that stand? And, most interesting of all, the old Temple of Thor and Wodin?

On the north side of the cathedral is a little *place*, shadowed by an immense plane-tree, the giant trunk of which is protected by a low wall. The tree struck us at once by its great size and the evident care with which it had been preserved. No children climbed among its branches, which were as perfect and carefully tended as though it were one of the sacred trees of the Druids. And the name of the

*place* where it stood, "Place de la Prison!" But, as if to remove all doubt, at its foot had been set a board with an inscription: "Arbre de la liberté, planté le 10 germinal, An VII."

What thoughts did not the sight of this great and beautiful tree evoke! We could fancy we saw the ceremony of its planting, and could hear the noise of the shouting, bells clashing, voices yelling the "Marseillaise," and see the little silent enclosure crowded once more with red-capped men, and women wearing the colours of the Revolution. And in the midst was their Tree of Liberty, then a young sapling, emblem of what this savage, destructive dawn was to develop into, the great modern Republic of France. But at Bayeux those wild days seem very far off and unreal. For, in truth, it is a sleepy little place, living in its past, much of its prosperity even coming from the tourists who visit it on account of its antiquities. A clean, quiet, little place, with a certain likeness to England in its lush meadows, and fat cows and well-fed, friendly dogs. It has shrunk little by little from the great city it once was. There were the early wars when it was periodically burned and wrecked. There were the accidental fires, almost inevitable when the houses were built of wood and there were no fire-engines. There was the awful siege and sacking of the town when the English joined with the King of Navarre and reduced it to cinders. Earlier the terrible assaults by the Comte de Dunois, when the city would have been completely destroyed save

for the timely apparition of the centuries dead-and-gone Saint Ragnobert, who came to warn him that Bayeux would be given up to him voluntarily the next day if he spared it. In fact, it is a miracle that this sleepy little Norman town exists at all at the present day, when we consider its tumultuous past: and how the cathedral has escaped wreckage is the greatest miracle of all, unless, indeed, we believe in the alleged intervention of the good old Bishop Saint. But come, we must visit the tapestry, for that is the greatest of all the miracles of preservation for which Bayeux ought to be thankful.

To speak correctly, this wonderful and precious survival of Norman days is not tapestry, which is a woven material, but embroidery worked, as is surely certain, by Queen Matilda, wife of William the First of England.

In former times it was hung round the nave of the cathedral on great feast days, and is said to have formed part of the decorations on the occasion when the church was consecrated in presence of the royal couple and their children. I must confess that I was prepared to be rather disappointed with this ancient needlework of which I had heard so much. But when I entered the great upper chamber of what was once the palace of the bishops of Bayeux, I found how greatly I had been mistaken, for this "*Tapiserie de La Reine Matilde*" is, quite apart from its origin, a very astonishing thing, resembling, in some ways, the paintings on

Egyptian tombs and papyri. An excellent reproduction lies before me as I write, but nothing prepares one for the original.

In the first place, it is so very narrow, only twenty inches wide, and so long that the airtight glass case in which it hangs fills the large chamber, winding backwards and forwards like a maze. Upon it we read the story of the conquest, told from a strictly Norman point of view, as was of course inevitable, the artist being William's wife.

We are shown Harold conferring with Edward the Confessor, who is seated in his palace, crowned, sceptred, and wearing the beard of an old man. The young man is asking permission to go hunting in Brittany, but in reality to bring back his two brothers whom Edward has placed with the Duke as hostages for the good conduct of their father Earl Godwin, just deceased. Edward, being greatly attached to Harold, remonstrates, saying that Duke William will prove too clever for him, and that he will get into trouble. Harold, however, sets out, equipped as though for a hunting expedition, with his dogs, his falcon, his knights, and his servants. It is to Bosham he makes his way, where he has a palace, inherited, as some say, from his grandfather, King Canute, and where we see him praying in the old church. Afterwards he and his followers are seen refreshing themselves and wading out into the shallow water of the estuary to gain the ships which are to carry them over to the Breton coast.

And here I feel that, living as I do within a few miles of the royal and ancient Bosham, I owe it to the quaint little place to say a few words about its history.

I suppose that Harold, who was Count of Wessex and Duke of Kent, and who had often played there with his brothers and his sister Edith as a boy, would not see much difference in Bosham if he returned there to-day. It is still the village of

“the sea creek . . . the petty rill  
That falls into it, the green field, the grey church,  
The simple lobster-basket, and the mesh. . . .”

Old fishermen sit smoking along the sea-wall of an evening, just as their fathers have done for centuries past; and the quaint houses and little inns, Harbour View, Mariner's Terrace, the Anchor, still lie there with their backs turned to the water, so that at high tide one can draw a boat up to the back steps and jump in from one's kitchen. And one of the old women, Mrs Frogbrook, or another, seeing that you are interested in the place, will tell you how Harold would “sit for hours fishing for pike in the moat that surrounded his house,” and how his grandfather had a palace near by, called Stone-walls, and that it was “just here” the great Danish King seated himself and bade the advancing tide stand still. For, in spite of its humble aspect, this Bosham is well known to the antiquary and the archæologist. For instance, the church in which we have left Harold kneeling. Camden tells us that

it was here that a "Scottish monk called Dicul had a very small cell, and in it five or six religious men living poorly in service of the Lord, which many years after was converted into a retiring place for King Harold, whence he, upon a time, for his recreation, made out with a little bark into the main sea, and was with a contrary pirrie carried violently into Normandy, and there detained in hold until he had by oath assured the Kingdom of England unto William of Normandy," as we shall read later in the tapestry. But, after all, it is the church which is the glory of Bosham; and, if you happen to have the good fortune to visit it when one of the old people is about, you will hear such stories as throw quite a new light on the history of the little fishing village! For instance, at foot of the old chancel pier you will notice a slab, and upon it a black raven, and will be told that it covers the grave of the little twelve-year-old daughter of King Canute, "she who died when the family was spending the summer at Bosham." And you will hear how her little body was found lying in its stone coffin surrounded by its long golden hair, when the floor of the nave was lowered some years ago (the woman who told me was a child at the time, and saw the grave opened).

And the chancel arch itself: How strange it is to see it represented so accurately in the ancient needlework. And there are the sculptured bases of the pillars round the nave, and the splendid font, and the very ancient masonry of the chancel.

Yes, one feels that, indeed, a thousand years are but one day when one visits the old church of Bosham.

Returning to the story as told by the tapestry, we find that no sooner has Harold set sail than a tempest has blown him out of his course and set him down at the mouth of the Somme, on the territory of William's half brother, and bitterest enemy, Guy of Pontieu. The coast is infested by wreckers, who seize the English knights and shut them up in a tower, possibly the old ruinous building near Saint Valery, still known as Harold's Tower. After some delay he is taken to Bayeux, and imprisoned in the castle, and so the story continues, till Harold finds means of sending a messenger to William, telling him of his plight, and Guy is ordered to deliver up his prisoner to his overlord. But we need not follow every detail of the story. We see the Duke and Harold setting out upon their strange, half-mythical journey to Brittany, and are shown the King of that country escaping from his castle of Dol by sliding down a rope, and entrenching himself first at Rennes and then at Dinan, where he finally surrenders. The galloping horses, the movement of the men, the extraordinary spirit of the work, is astounding. . . . And then Harold is knighted, and he and William return to Bayeux, where the great and much disputed scene takes place, in which Harold swears to deliver up England to the Duke after the death of Edward.

This scene, perhaps in some ways the most

important of all, since, if it took place, William was justified in his later conduct, is somewhat slurred over in the tapestry. Possibly neither William nor Matilda was proud of the way in which the promise was extorted; but, as it occurred at this town of Bayeux, it is not out of place to give it some prominence.

On arriving with Harold at Bayeux, the Duke summoned his nobles as for a parliament, and the evening before caused all the relics he could procure to be brought secretly to the palace, and stored away in a great chest covered with a pall, over which was placed a magnificent gold-embroidered cloth, and upon it were placed two trifling little reliquaries of but small account. Next morning the Court assembled, and William, seated upon his throne, summoned Harold to swear upon the relics to assist him in obtaining possession of the crown of England. Wace says that when Harold placed his hand on the chest to swear, it trembled and his flesh quivered. But when, having vowed to marry William's daughter, and to do all in his power "according to his might and wit, after the death of Edward, to deliver up England to the Duke, so help him God and these holy relics," William took the covering off the chest, and showed him the sacred bones which lay there, and the bodies of the Saints in their wrappings, he trembled and shook and was sore afraid, and shortly after took his leave and returned to England.

There is little doubt but that he landed at the

same port as that from which he had sailed. We see the castle and a watcher stationed on a balcony and women within awaiting his return. There follows a visit to King Edward, to whom he relates all that has happened. Next we see the King carried in a litter to Saint Peter's abbey at Westminster, where he dies, after prophesying disaster to the kingdom, saying: "Behold the Lord hath bent His bow, by fire and sword will He chasten!" And then Harold, breaking his oath, receives the crown and battle-axe from Archbishop Stigand, and is represented sitting upon his throne, acclaimed by the people.

There follows the appearance of the comet, "yon grimly glaring, treble-brandished scourge of England," as Tennyson calls it, which for a month shone in the sky, terrifying the superstitious people of the day. Then it is that the news of Harold's crowning reaches William, and we see the ship coming to anchor in the Norman port. I wish I had space to tell the story as given by Wace. How William, who was hunting in his park at Rouen, had just strung his bow to try some new arrows, when he saw a messenger, all weary and travel-stained, approaching, who drew him aside and told him of King Edward's death and how Harold had seized upon the crown. Without a word the Duke gave his bow to his page, got into his boat, and, crossing the Seine, came to his hall, and sat down at the end of a bench, covering his face with his mantle and resting his head against a pillar.

But the tapestry tells nothing of this. Instead, it shows us the Duke instantly ordering the construction of a fleet, and trees are cut down and sawn into planks, ships are made and launched, and laden with food, wine, and arms. Finally, one splendid scene following closely upon another, we see William embarking with his army and his horses, crossing the Channel, and landing at Pevensey.

The soldiers go riding off to Hastings to find food, an ox is killed, sheep slaughtered, and presently the lords are seated at table, and the bishop of Bayeux, the false Odo, is saying grace. And a fortress is constructed at Hastings, a house is set on fire; now William is mounting his horse, and the tapestry becomes one amazing battle scene, even the frieze and the lower border are filled with dying horses and men. The Normans, as was their custom, have shaved their heads and faces for the battle, and wear pointed helmets, but the Saxons wear moustaches and long hair. And then we see the death of Harold and his brothers, and the long strip comes to an untimely end.

It is said to have been hung round the nave of the cathedral at its consecration. One writer asserts that it was offered by Queen Matilda to her brother-in-law Bishop Odo for that purpose. But we shall never know for certain the story of the actual working of the *Tapisserie de la Reine Matilde*. For my part, I like to think of the Queen sitting in her tower and working through the long hours,

together with her ladies, that they might have a gift ready for the acceptance of their hero on his return from his conquest of England.

The first existing mention of the tapestry is in an inventory of the treasure of the cathedral, dated 1476, "a very long and narrow cloth embroidered with figures and writings, representing the Conquest of England, which is hung round the nave of the church on feast days."

When the Calvinists pillaged the church, the embroidery was given into the charge of the Town Council, who guarded it during those terrible days, and apparently returned it to the cathedral later.

In 1792 the soldiers of the Revolution, requiring a cover for a waggon, fetched out the ancient treasure from the sacristy, and had already fixed it in place, when someone ordered it to be removed and a more suitable covering provided. And so the priceless old treasure passed from hand to hand, till, in 1804, it found itself once more placed under the protection of the mayor, with an order that it should be publicly exposed in the cathedral for a fortnight every summer.

It was kept fastened round a windlass, from which it was unrolled whenever anyone wished to see it, and the rough usage wore it considerably, especially towards the latter end. So it was finally taken to the library of the bishop's palace, and placed in the position in which we see it to-day.

How wonderful it is to think, as one looks at the ancient stitches, of the centuries which have passed

since the delicate white fingers of Matilda and her ladies placed them there! What tears may not have fallen upon it as they worked at one of the battle scenes, how they laughed and chatted about the various knights depicted, and . . . how we should love to have heard them!



# Date Due

|               |  |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| F 1           |  |  |  |
| NOV 9 '80     |  |  |  |
| NOV 3 03 1980 |  |  |  |
| MAR 16 1986   |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
|               |  |  |  |
| Demco 293-5   |  |  |  |

DC 611  
N848G6

ST. OLAF COLLEGE  
DC611.N848 G6  
Gostling, Franc - The lure of Normandy, by Frances



3 0111 00139 3338



T3-BOV-089

